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Marxism Today

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Marxism Today

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Higher Education in the Nuclear Age*

Sam Lilley

THERE never has been a time like the one we are living in. There never has been a time when every aspect of life was changing so quickly as it is today—a time so full of the most wonderful possibilities of progress, so fraught with dangers of new powers misused.

When we take something that is happening today and ask ourselves the question: "When was the last time that something analogous happened?", the answer more often than not turns out to be "At the beginning of the human story, when ape-man was becoming man," or "At the time of the agricultural revolution, when man ceased to be merely one animal among many, hunted as much as hunting, and started on his long effort to control the world around him," or "At the beginning of civilisation, some 5,000 years ago, when man started to live in a way recognisably like that of today." The only previous analogy for this or that event of today is at the beginning of humanity, or at the beginning of agriculture, or at the beginning of civilisation. And when we put the whole lot together, there is no previous analogy at all—we are living in a time that is utterly unprecedented.

Take nuclear energy, for example. It is no mere turn of phrase, but a statement resulting from a sober analysis of the types of forces involved, to say that the only previous happening analogous to our harnessing of nuclear energy is the harnessing of fire—one of the key events that distinguishes man from the beasts. Everything we have done in the half-million years or so since then is little more than the logical working out of what was foreshadowed by that ape-like creature who first fed a fire instead of running away from it. And now, with nuclear energy, we enter a new era that will make our successors as different from us as we are from the ape-man who started to use fire. But this time it will not take half a million years—history is speeding up, and the change may be completed in only a few generations.

Or consider man's control of space. Old Stone Age man can hardly be said to have controlled any space at all—unless we count the tiny area lit and warmed by his camp fire. It was with agriculture that man seriously started to control space—first only a few fields round his settlement, but gradually extending till in this century he controls, to all intents and purposes, the whole surface of the earth. And now—just over a year ago—he has started on the next stage: the control of cosmic space. Even the best efforts of science fiction writers fail to envisage the consequences.

On the way from agricultural barbarism to civilisation man first started to use machines to do the work of his muscles—the cart, the sailing ship, the potter's wheel, and later the water wheel, windmill, steam engine and all the rest. Now he has started to use machines to take over work that was formerly thought to be the monopoly of the unique and inimitable human brain.

And it is the same wherever we look in technology. Over and over again, the discovery of one new material has changed the whole nature of society. Now, with the aid of organic chemistry, silicone chemistry, X-ray crystallography and the like, we create new materials almost at will—and instead of stumbling by chance on materials with desirable properties, we decide *in advance* what properties we want, and create the new material *to specification*. Certainly so far as technological progress goes there never has been a time even remotely like the present.

The Positive Sciences of Today

Yet all these things are only particular applications of something much greater—of science and a technology based on science. Science, in one of its aspects, is simply a systematic way of inventing. Man has always invented—his fire and stone tools, his agriculture, his metallurgy, water wheels, printing presses, what you will. But this was largely a chance process—a matter of grasp-

* This article is the substance of the opening address at a Conference on "Higher Education in the Nuclear Age", organised by the Communist Party, on November 22nd, 1958. The need to re-write it hurriedly for publication has probably left too many traces of the spoken word, for which the author apologises.

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ing opportunities rather than creating them. Then in the seventeenth century it occurred to men like Francis Bacon, and after him to the founders of the Royal Society, that if one undertook a fundamental investigation of the laws of nature, and then looked around to find out how one's discoveries might be practically applied, this process of invention could be systematised and enormously speeded up. The seed they sowed took a long time to mature, but now we are reaping the first harvest.

This positive science, with its systematic application to technology, is completely without precedent. And it ensures that our present acceleration of technological progress will not, like some previous spurts, slow down again after a few generations or centuries. The technological transformation of our conditions of life will go on as long as we want it to go on, and probably as fast as we can possibly cope with it.

And what are the consequences? The first and most important is that the world of plenty is within sight. We can now see, fairly clearly, just how we could, within a generation or so, give every man, woman and child on this earth a standard of material wealth as high as that enjoyed today by any but the very rich, and give too an ampleness of leisure in which to develop the intellectual and cultural side of life to its fulness. We can see, scientifically and culturally, how this *could* be done—provided we can free ourselves from the bonds imposed by modes of special organisation which this very technological progress has made obsolete, provided we can destroy a vast spider's web of vested interest and inertia that is now holding everything back.

The social transformation demanded by the new science and technology is just as vast as the change in science and technology itself. And it, too, has only one precedent. The hunting and food-gathering savage, by working to the limits of his powers, could just manage to live at a bare subsistence level. There was nothing left over for the exploiter to snatch. And so he lived in a simple, classless, equalitarian society—the equality of extreme poverty for all. Agriculture and the other inventions that followed it, like copper metallurgy, created a situation in which the peasant could produce more than was needed for the subsistence of himself and his family. There was a surplus to tempt the exploiter. And—hard as it might be on the individual peasant—the concentration of the modest surpluses in the hands of a powerful few was a necessary step if the new wealth were to be used as capital for further progress. And so there arose the division of society into classes, into rich exploiter and poor exploited, which has been with us from 3000 B.C. till the present day, with only minor variations in the detailed relations between classes.

The step at 3000 B.C. was from poverty for all to wealth for a few. Now, technically, we are in a position to take the next step—from wealth for a few to wealth for all. We are living in the era when the class divisions that have served their turn in various forms for 5,000 years must give way to the new classless societies of socialism and then communism—the social organisation of wealth for everybody.

A Classless Society Essential

It is not merely that science and technology have now made a classless society *possible*. They have also made it *essential*. The old economic system, the class system—even in its most advanced form of capitalism—is proving itself incapable of making full constructive use of the new technological possibilities. It even turns advancing technology from an instrument for progress and happiness into an instrument for misery and destruction. The economy of capitalism was well adapted for making progress while scarcity still ruled the world. It cannot cope with plenty—or even with the prospect of plenty in the not too distant future. Automation, with its tremendous increases in the productivity of labour, ought to mean a rapid advance towards the world of plenty and of ample leisure. Instead, it has all too often given plenty to a few shareholders and compulsory leisure, in the form of unemployment, to the many. The American car industry undertook wholesale automation in 1955: the result was a year of record profits, but 200,000 men—a quarter of the labour force—unemployed. All this, because the unplanned nature of capitalism, the greed for profit and the inability of the system to distribute enough purchasing power, make it impossible for the economy to accept great increases in productivity—in potential wealth—without serious dislocation.

Yet, like all ruling and exploiting classes of the past, those who benefit from the present system will do anything, literally anything, to preserve it. And as their defence continues on a last-ditch basis, their economic and social machinery becomes more and more inadequate for dealing with advancing technology, so that even the slow rise in the standard of living which has been going on grinds now to a standstill and even tends to drop back. Under capitalism, even with all that science and technology can do, we tend to move away from the world of plenty that is now open to us.

And worse. The defence of the old system is

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no longer a question of capitalists and monopolists and their political representatives resisting the advance of the working people in their own country. The struggle has become international. More than a third of the people of the world have made this transition to socialism. That fact strikes fear into the hearts of the reactionaries. They create the cold war. They threaten continually to turn it into actual war. And they hope by this means to stop the advance of socialism—perhaps even to turn it back. Their hope is vain, but it exposes us to worse dangers than any I have yet sketched—the dangers of nuclear war. Nuclear war probably could not wipe out humanity, despite what the ultra-pessimists say; but it could put us back 5,000 years, so that the whole terrible struggle from the beginning of civilisation to the dawn of socialism would have to be undertaken again.

It is not just the danger of hot nuclear war that we have to worry about. The determination of the people can avert that. But all the time the resources of the new technology are being perverted to make hydrogen bombs and test them, to make inter-continental ballistic rockets, and to make all those less spectacular parts of the war machine that eat up all but a tiny fraction of the new wealth that science and technology are creating. This is the most striking—and the most fearful—respect in which our time is unprecedented in human history. We devote a completely unprecedented proportion of our wealth to the creation of instruments of destruction—over the last few years the world has been spending *over* £30,000 *million a year* on military preparations and military actions. While that goes on—and even if there were never to be another outbreak of actual fighting—it will remain impossible to use the resources of science and technology for progress.

The Prospect of Plenty

The prospect of plenty has brought yet another powerful force into the turmoil of our time. The people of the underdeveloped countries have come to realise that poverty and starvation are not the inevitable lot of mankind—that they, too, can move rapidly forward, provided, first, that they throw off those imperialist bonds that are holding them down and, second, that they develop their own science and technology and industry to catch up with the few favoured countries of the present. And from this arises a whole series of further political conflicts that I cannot dwell on.

But let us face this fact. It is very far from obvious that, as things are at present, modern advances in science and technology are in any way helping the lot of the underdeveloped countries. Often the effect is the reverse—when we learn how to make synthetic rubber, one major result is to depress the living conditions of countries like Malaya and Indonesia which produce natural rubber. Science is making the industrial countries less dependent on producers of this or that raw material. And as a result of this and similar trends, the standard of living in many parts of the world is not rising but distinctly deteriorating.

And we in the advanced countries cannot ignore these facts. We cannot have a world of plenty while our brothers in Asia and Africa live in squalor. The world of plenty is indivisible. If we do not help to lift them up, then inevitably they will drag us down. And so, as part of our path to plenty, we are faced with the grave task of helping these backward economies to develop with unprecedented rapidity.

I have written of the tremendous scientific and technological changes of our time, and of the equally tremendous social and political changes that must accompany them. And we must not forget that a transformation just as vast is taking place in those aspects of our culture which, for want of a better word, I shall call by their old name of "the humanities"—art, literature, philosophy and the rest. Here the changes are more confused—it would be a bolder man than me who would say unhesitatingly just what is progressive and what is reactionary in painting or music today. The changes are confused, but they are just as great as in the other fields. And the fact that they are confused only makes more difficult our task of reconstructing a new culture for our time. Yet that reconstruction must be done. Poetry and painting are not just the amusement of a few connoisseurs. They are part of the social nexus that binds human beings together in their co-operative endeavour. A society that is confused about art or philosophy is a society that is to that extent weakened.

Problems to be Solved

It may seem to my readers that I am taking an unconscionably long time in getting to the subject of higher education. But the subject is not just higher education; it is higher education *in the nuclear age*. The point is to discuss what higher education must do and can do towards solving all these problems that I have referred to. It is too easy to get lost in details—to argue expertly and professionally about just what percentage increase there ought to be in the number of university places or whether the correct upper limit for the size of an educational institution

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is 4,500 or 5,000. Detailed decisions on such points are of course ultimately necessary. But we shall miss the point unless we see everything in the wide perspective of the tremendous changes the world is undergoing in our time.

Every change that I have mentioned sets a problem for higher education to solve. Of course these are not primarily educational problems. Each one of them is fundamentally a social-political problem. And I think most readers would agree that the ultimate condition for solving them can be very simply stated—world socialism. Very simply stated, much more difficult to attain!—but luckily that question is beyond the scope of this article. What does concern us is that each one of these problems has an educational aspect—a very important educational aspect. If higher education is to play its part in getting us out of our present mess and leading us on quickly to the world of plenty, then higher education itself will have to be radically transformed. The purpose of this article is to discuss in very broad terms (leaving details to others) what changes are needed in the scheme of higher education and how these changes can be brought about. And even if every now and then a part of the answer turns out to be that the change cannot be made in full except under conditions of socialism, we have still to face the fact that socialism is not with us and may not be with us for some time. We must accept the realities of the present and do as much as we can as quickly as we can, within the limitations of those realities, towards creating a higher educational system that will help the world to solve the pressing problems of today. That is my excuse for having devoted so much time to painting in the background. Every one of those changes which I have sketched sets a problem for higher education to solve, or provides new means for higher education to use, or puts new obstacles in the way of the advance of higher education.

If we are to draw the benefits from the new scientific and technological possibilities, then we need a higher education that will provide us with vastly increased numbers of scientists and technologists. And this is no narrow question of averting the generally recognised danger that Britain may soon become a technically backward country. We must see the need on a world scale. The world of plenty, I have said, is indivisible. And our higher education has to take a big share in the burden of starting the rapid development of the underdeveloped countries—initially by supplying them with the scientists and technologists they need to begin advancing their economies; even more by providing places in our universities and colleges for training their own native experts; and finally, by providing some of the man-power that is to enable them to create their own system of higher education, so that they can, within a few years, become independent of what must always look suspiciously like our charity.

Expansion of Higher Education

The new technology makes the biggest single demand for the expansion of our higher education. At the same time it provides enough surplus wealth to make that expansion easily possible. But the concentration on war and preparation for war eats up all this surplus wealth, frustrates all our efforts. Let us be clear on this point to begin with. So far as it concerns finance —or rather the goods and services that finance represents—there is no restriction at all on what we could do in the way of expanding higher education. Any conceivable target we might set ourselves for the next few years could only involve, in this country, additional expenditures of the order of a £100 million a year. There would be no difficulty at all in providing that, if it were not for the single disastrous fact that we waste fifteen times as much on military expenditure. The real problem is not finance. The real problem—for higher education, as for so many other things —is to get a change in our foreign policy, so that the colossal waste of military expenditure can be reduced and some part of the reduction go towards providing the higher education we need. And so we should simply *demand* financial allocations adequate to whatever plans we propose, and *demand* that military expenditure be reduced to make that finance available—and then we can get down to the real problems and the real difficulties that face us.

The demands of the new technology on higher education are clear enough. One can state fairly precisely how many places are required in our universities and technical colleges in this or that subject, and what sort of professional training is needed in each. It is much more difficult to say precisely what higher education should be doing towards getting us out of the cultural confusion that I mentioned earlier—towards giving a direction and a coherence to our art and literature and music and philosophy. What it amounts to is that we have got to find ways of re-creating our whole culture round two major themes: *first,* the theme that science and technology have come to occupy a central place in our lives and will continue to grow more important for generations to come, so that the new culture must be one that puts science in a key position; and *second,* the theme

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that we are in the period of transition to classless society, so that the new culture must not be—as past cultural systems have been—a culture of this or that class; the new culture must be a culture of the whole people, a culture in which the whole people share and to which the whole people contribute. Just how reforms in higher education are to help to bring this about is no easy matter to specify. I shall have something to say later about the first theme. And as regards the second, the fundamental condition at least is that the present class bias of higher education must be abolished.

Class Bias

For let us make no mistake, despite the changes of the last few years, there is still a tremendous class bias in our educational system. Nominally higher education is open to all, but in actual fact the method of selection—which, remember, begins in practice well before the age of eleven—enormously favours the children of the well-to-do.

The manual working class forms 72 per cent of the population of England, but the latest investigation (for 1955-56) showed that only 9 per cent of male students admitted to Cambridge (and living in England) came from this class. The 1.3 per cent of the nation's youth whose parents can afford to send them to public schools took 56 per cent of the places at Cambridge in that year. The bias is only too clear.

The fact that we are in transition to a classless society demands that this bias shall be eliminated —that higher education shall *in practice* be equally open to all. But the fact that we are in transition to classless society also provides us with the means of achieving this aim. The transition expresses itself in a relentless pressure of the working people on every remnant of vested interest. In this country the pressure is not yet strong enough to overthrow the old order, but it is capable of breaking down one by one the barriers which the old order puts in the way. The whole strength of the Labour movement must be mobilised to abolish as rapidly as possible all the barriers and privileges and tricks by which the present bias is maintained—the segregation at 11-plus, the advantages of fee-paying schools, the self-perpetuating privileges of Oxford and Cambridge colleges in selecting what they consider the élite, and all the rest. The Labour movement has the strength to wipe out these barriers and privileges. But to do so it must be aware of what needs to be done and united in the doing of it. And anybody who is connected with progress in education must also be very deeply concerned with questions of how to achieve this awareness and this unity of action.

For let us have no illusions. Next to the waste of war, class bias is the thing that does most to prevent progress in higher education. It is the thing that most urgently needs changing. But it is also the thing to which our ruling class will stick most tenaciously. For they know that once higher education has become truly open to all, there will be no stopping the forward march of the people. Their outdated system will be doomed.

Now let me start becoming a little more concrete about what has to be done. The most obvious thing to be said about our higher education is that we have not got nearly enough of it—not nearly enough. That is most obvious in the field of science and technology. The world we are moving into will need enormous increases in the numbers of scientists and technologists. And we in Britain do not have enough scientists and technologists even for maintaining our present very slow rate of industrial progress. There is nothing revolutionary about saying that. The captains of industry say the same. And they show that they mean it by the way they go round our universities every Easter begging the young men who will soon be graduating to join their firm rather than some other one. Yet this shortage is in the context of an economy that is very nearly stagnant.

Expanding Production

Suppose we were to decide to expand our production at the rate of 4 per cent a year. That is actually a ridiculously low rate of progress—the Soviet Union manages something in the region of 11 per cent—but the fact is that we have not attained even a beggarly 4 per cent expansion for many years. And it has been reckoned that in order to do so we should have to increase our annual output of scientists and technologists from the present 12,000 to about 20,000. The Government's plans would produce that number by 1970—if they don't meet a slump on the way. We are expected to wait twelve years before we can even start a 4 per cent annual expansion of our economy. We obviously cannot be content with such a prospect.

It is the same in other professions. We have not got enough doctors for an effective health service. Following the Willinck Report, accepted by the Government, the output of medical and dental graduates has been *reduced* by 10 per cent in the last few years. We want a rapid increase, not a decrease.

One can run through the professions in these terms and show that we have to make a very rapid increase in the output of qualified people for all of them. And lastly, let us not forget the

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arts, the humanities. They are only too likely to be trampled into the ground in the present mad rush to grab the niggardly number of higher education places that Government policy allows. But that must not be. In our present cultural confusion, we need more historians and philosophers, not fewer; more people who can appreciate our literary heritage, more men and women educated in all the humanities (though we want the curriculum to give them a different slant on these things from what it does now).

I shall not enter into a detailed assessment of the needs in the various fields.* It will be sufficient to indicate the order of size of the target figures to be aimed at by, say, 1970: a nearly four-fold increase in the output of scientists and technologists of university degree standard (about three-fold from the universities and four- to five-fold from the technical colleges); increases of about the same order for most of the other professions; and a more modest expansion of 30 to 40 per cent in the arts. There would also have to be expansion at a comparable rate in the lower levels of further education—scientists and technologists, for example, can only give full value to the community if they are well backed up by technicians and craftsmen. Overall these figures imply that the numbers of students entering higher education must expand at something like 10 per cent per year for the period 1958-1970.

Are such targets attainable? The answer is yes —but let us face it, only if we make an immense effort. What do we need to achieve them? We need (1) more buildings and equipment, (2) more students, and (3) more staff.

We sweep the first of these aside. Diverting even a tiny proportion of our armaments expenditure would provide all the buildings and equipment we could possibly ask for.

But the question of finding enough young people fit to enter the universities is a more serious matter. This is the favourite retort of those who want to look educationally progressive, but do not want to have to do anything about it. More young people in the universities would be desirable, they say, but unfortunately there are not enough of them with sufficient intelligence to benefit from a university course. There is a short answer to that one. In the U.S.S.R. the proportion of each age group that takes higher education is between 10 and 20 per cent, according to just what categories are included as "higher". The 10 per cent refers to universities or to specialised institutions of the same standard. Are we starting a new race theory in reverse, then?—and saying that our native intelligence is so low that only 4 per cent of our young people—for that is the present figure—are bright enough to benefit from a university education?

No Lack of Talent

Of course not. It is not that we lack the talent. It is simply that we fail to use it. Now we have got to start using it, and quickly. There is no future for any country that neglects to get the very best out of the abilities of its youth. The main lines of the changes needed to make maximum use of our youthful talent are clear enough (though there is much detail to be argued out), and may be briefly summarised as:

First, pay adequate maintenance grants to reduce the financial temptation to get a job quickly (and this should apply also to the later years at school).

Second, eliminate the sex bias—only 2.6 per cent of our girls get to universities, against 5.8 per cent of boys. Equality of opportunity there would produce many new students.

Third, and far more important, eliminate the *class* bias. And that does not just mean that we must throw university places open equally to all who can qualify for them (which is almost the situation already, except Oxford and Cambridge). The class bias starts working at the age of eight or nine, when the primary schools start streaming with a view to their 11-plus results, and when the toddler who has plenty of ability but comes from a working class home, where there is no educational tradition and little appreciation of the value of education, finds himself doing his homework in a corner in competition with TV and so gets put into a lower stream. From that day onwards, his chances of getting the sort of education that would equip him to enter university steadily diminish at every rung of the ladder. Reform the school system to get rid of that bias, and there will be no difficulty at all about providing the students. And, of course, here we touch on another aspect of higher education that I have space only to mention—the provision of far more and far better equipped teachers, who can start to provide the raw material for the rest of the higher education machine to get to work on.

Lastly, get rid of the notion that university education is a sort of academic version of the four-minute mile. There are plenty of young people who cannot keep up with the strain of cramming in the required amount of learning in three years, but who could do it perfectly well in four or five.

* These assessments will be set out in a Communist Party policy document on Higher Education to be published shortly.

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And it is far from obvious that the speedster who can get to the B.Sc. winning point in three years gives a better end-product than the steady (often the more thorough) type who takes four or five. So we need to lengthen our university courses, ultimately to five years, and as an immediate step, to four.

The Staff Problem

I think the staff problem is really more difficult than the student one—if only because it takes five or six years longer to make a university lecturer than to make a university entrant. We are talking about tripling the staff in many subjects within ten to twelve years—and if we take seriously the idea of lengthening the course, then it is not a matter of tripling but of quadrupling. The point is not to discuss whether this can be done or not. It has to be done, and the point is to discuss ways and means of doing it, and to decide what must be sacrificed to get it done. I cannot enter into this problem in detail, but basically there are only two lines of approach.

First, there are about 4,900 civilian graduate scientists and technologists, many of them of the highest calibre, directly engaged in government war research, and a number almost certainly greater than this are employed by private enterprise in what is again essentially war research. It is the old story: get a sane foreign policy, a real disarmament policy, and then we can provide a flood of people for the first steps in increasing the teaching staff.

Secondly, we have got to realise that this is essentially a man-power investment problem. A much higher proportion of our young graduates have to be fed back into the universities (or other institutions) in order to increase the future rate of production. And in our sort of society that is essentially a problem of salaries. Over and over again we see talented teachers leaving our universities because industry or the Civil Service can offer higher pay. Teaching people to do is traditionally regarded as less valuable than doing. That tradition must be reversed. *Pravda* a few years ago carried a pathetic letter from a Soviet factory director replying to persistent complaints about the quality of his products. "How can I be expected to do better," he said, "when all the first class technologists refuse to enter my factory because they can get better money as university or technical college lecturers?" That sums it up. We have got to *invest* our best brains. We must forgo the immediate advantages we might derive from using them in industry or elsewhere and put them back into the higher educational machine as capital that will produce very much more in the future—and so the problem is simply one of deciding how many potential improvements in detergents we must defer for a few years in order to provide the staff we need.

Qualitative Change

But quantitative expansion is not the whole story. There will have to be big changes in the whole outlook of higher education. We do not just want to turn out greatly increased numbers of highly specialised experts in this or that field, all completely ignorant of the relation of their expertness to the problems of the world in general. We need engineers who understand the place of engineering in human progress and consider their expert decisions in terms of how they will help or hinder human progress. We need philosophers and literary scholars who understand that the central problem of our time—which must therefore also be a central problem of their specialism—is the problem of how to use the resources of science and technology to transform a world of misery into a world of plenty and how to reorganise society to make this possible. We need, in a word, a return to the idea of a liberal education—only now that phrase is *not* to mean the production of cultured gentlemen; it is to mean the production of cultured working technologists and scientists and classical scholars and historians—with the word "cultured" re-interpreted to mean "Alive to the needs and problems of our day."

In fact the present tendency is all the opposite way. Our universities* are frankly degenerating into collections of technical departments, each intent on pumping as much specialised knowledge as it can into its students. And there is little difference on this point between departments that teach the technicians of electrical engineering and those that teach the techniques of teaching others the techniques of translating Plato.

More and more we are concentrating on turning out narrow-minded specialists, who haven't a clue as to what the world is about or how their specialism fits into the scheme of things. And such tame specialists are like putty in the hands of those who want to pervert scholarship for their

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* I hope to be forgiven for writing so often of universities, rather than higher education in general. I cannot cover everything, and this is the sphere in which I am least ignorant. Most of my remarks can be interpreted, *mutatis mutandis*, for all forms of higher education.

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own ends. What they are told to do they do—they do it with great efficiency, but with almost no thought of the end-result. Whether it is a new antibiotic or an H-bomb, it is just another job for the expert, and the expert gets on with it.

This dangerous trend must be reversed. We want instead to produce people who are certainly expert in this or that particular skill, but who understand their own expertise in the context of an appreciation of our economic and social problems and our cultural heritage and the crisis it is going through—who understand these things in such a way that they can consciously use their specialist skills for the betterment of humanity.

There is some realisation of this problem, even in official circles. And some half-hearted attempts have been made to solve it. But they are not really good enough. It is not really good enough to put on a general course of cultural lectures which students are supposed to be encouraged to attend voluntarily, and at the same time to make it perfectly clear that their whole future may depend on whether they use that particular hour to mug up one further theorem in higher geometry. It is not enough to put all students through a first-year course consisting of a hotch-potch of lectures drawn from all conceivable topics without any thread of integration running through them. It is not good enough to appoint a Lecturer in Liberal Studies at a technical college and then leave him to fight for teaching time against the established power of specialist departments all waiting to pump a little bit more expertise into their victims.

And in fact this is a very difficult problem. We are caught in a vicious circle of the over-specialised teaching the next generation to over-specialise. It is no use *telling* such a one to be more liberal—he may be willing, but he does not understand what you mean. It will be a slow, long struggle, involving several academic generations, before we can make higher education really liberal. But we must start now, and there is plenty we can start doing immediately.

Halls of residence for *all* students form one of the keys to the matter. Put them all together, and they will do a great deal towards liberalising one another in spite of their professors and lecturers. Changing university entrance requirements would help greatly—so that the schools can rid themselves of the silly procedure by which they devote the last couple of years to producing youngsters specialised enough to meet the demands of university departments that insist on starting with narrow-minded entrants so that they can spend a further three years, narrowing their minds even further.

The university curriculum can be revised, so that all must study some subject outside their specialities. And full specialisation—single-minded devotion to one subject—should not be allowed till the last year, if at all. There must be less emphasis on keeping students' noses to their own particular grindstones by frequent and repeated examination.

The Curriculum

Of course, there is the objection about possible overcrowding of the curriculum. But there are several answers to that. This is one of the main reasons for urging a lengthening of the course—to give time to range about outside one's specialism. But in any case, I'm quite sure that when the Professor of Mechanical Engineering or the Professor of French says at a Senate meeting: "I'm sorry, gentlemen. I approve of this idea of a wider range of studies. But I'm really sorry, our courses occupy the students' whole time, and there's really nothing we can cut out."—I am sure that when he speaks in these terms he really has failed to understand. There is an enormous amount that could be cut out, if only we could change the emphasis from *learning what is known* (which is where it usually lies) to *learning how to learn*. It does not matter much if the student is left with quite large blanks here and there within his specialised field, provided that he has learned how to fill those blanks when the need arises. Blanks within the specialised field are far less important than a vast blank all round it.

Yet finding time to study one's specialisation is not enough. A conglomeration of unrelated subjects—a physicist doing a language and a little economics—is not a liberal education in the sense that matters. We need a new integration of higher education that will let the student see life and culture and their problems *as a whole,* even though it will be only one small part of this total picture that he can examine under a microscope.

There is no simple recipe for creating this new integration. We shall need a lot of trial, with many errors, to get there. But I believe—though this may be just my vested interest speaking—that the history of science and technology can play a central part in what we want to do. It is a fact that we cannot avoid, that science and technology have become the key instruments of progress. If we are to create a new unified culture, then the centre of that unity must be science. And so the history of science, *properly taught*—taught in such a way as to illuminate the manifold interactions between science and every other aspect of living and doing and thinking—can give every specialist the opportunity of seeing his own expertness in

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perspective. The specialist would become conscious of his own role in human progress. That, of course, is the basic reason why universities, even when they make appointments in the history of science, are usually careful to shun those who put the emphasis on the relations of science and society. The fact is, that if the products of our higher education really understood—as a result of good historical studies—the relations between scientific development and social change, then the ruling class could not depend on getting experts who would do tamely as they were told. That is what they are afraid of. And that ultimately is the reason for the resistance to this—as to every other—measure for seriously broadening the content of higher education.

Education All Through Life

I have been writing so far about the education of young people—up to their early twenties. And it is in those terms that higher education has been understood up till now. One spent 21 or 22 or 25 years learning, and then the next 34 or 40 years puttings one's learning into practice. That conception no longer fits the facts of today, and the misfit will be much worse in the early tomorrow. The skills that society demands are now changing so rapidly that we have to think of scientific and technical education as something that will go on all through life. Ten years from now, for all we know, there might be no use for steam engineers, except to maintain the dwindling number of steam plants we decide not to scrap immediately; former steam engineers would have to retrain as something else. And more soberly, new materials and new processes appear so rapidly that the scientist, technologist, technician and craftsman are in almost continual need of re-education in the latest techniques. In addition, there is, and there increasingly will be, a tendency for the average level of skill required in industry and agriculture to rise, and some considerable part of this rise must be catered for by improving the qualifications of those already at work rather than by injecting new blood at the higher levels. On the non-technical side, society and its culture are changing so rapidly as to demand that an increasing number of us shall spend an increasing proportion of our adult years re-educating ourselves to understand the new economic situation, or the implications of space travel, or the impact of three-dimensional colour television on dramatic art. As regards the latter—as regards continuing *non*-vocational education throughout adult life—I should be prepared to argue that qualitatively we have the best in the world (though maybe this is just another of my personal vested interests speaking). But there is not nearly enough of it—by a factor of something like a hundred.

And as regards continued technical and vocational education, our quality is (on the average) mediocre and our quantity abysmally small. It is in this respect that the contrast between the socialist and capitalist countries is most marked. It is startling enough to discover that the U.S.S.R. turns out, in proportion to population, five times as many young engineers of university degree standing as we do. It is much more startling to visit the First State ball-bearing factory in Moscow, as I did three years ago, and to find that out of 12,000 workers there, 5,000 are engaged in some sort of further study—in the factory's own technical school, in its secondary school for those who missed secondary education in their youth, or in various outside institutions to which the factory sends them. With the skills of its workers increasing at that pace, it is no wonder that this factory could design, install and put into operation within eighteen months a plant that does practically the whole process of making ball- and roller-bearings automatically, and at one single swoop doubles the productivity of labour (not just the productivity of operators, which is the usual measure and gives much higher figures, but the average productivity of all engaged on the plant: setters, maintenance staff, inspectors, supervisors and the rest). The tremendous industrial advances of the Soviet Union depend in very large measure on the fact that so large a proportion of the people continue to educate themselves all through life.

We must rise to that level too. The problem of getting there is partly the same business of finance, staff and so on, that has been discussed in relation to the higher education of young people. But there is another aspect of it that presents more difficulty—the creation of an atmosphere in which everybody feels that continuing one's education through life is the "done thing". When I came back from the U.S.S.R., I was frequently asked whether I had been subjected to much propaganda. And I had to answer, "Yes—an enormous amount". In common with the citizens of that country, I was subjected to propaganda asking me to help open up the virgin lands of Siberia; I was plagued with propaganda to persuade me to drink less vodka (my hosts effectively neutralised that one!); and I was bombarded with propaganda that said over and over again, "Get yourself more education! The country needs educated people. Do *your* share!"

That is not easy to imitate in our conditions. For there is a limit to the human capacity for absorbing propaganda. And that capacity is completely used up in this country, partly to persuade

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us to use one or other of several chemically identical detergents, and partly to persuade us that American rocket bases in Lincolnshire will neutralise the effects of hydrogen bombs on London. There is little room left for the really essential propaganda on education. But surely, if nothing else, the time that television does not have to devote to propaganda for detergents could be given instead to educational propaganda. What else could be done to create education-consciousness throughout the population?—I can only throw this question out as a matter for further thought. But this I must say uncompromisingly: a country that does not now regard education continuing throughout life as a normal and praiseworthy adult activity is a country that thirty years hence is going to need special treatment as one of those backward, underdeveloped areas that hold the rest of humanity back.

Democratic Control

Now there is one important topic that I have not yet touched on, and I am very conscious that I cannot deal with it adequately in my remaining space. And that is the question of democratic control of higher education. Our present machinery is very far from democratic. This arises partly from the existence of self-perpetuating institutions like the Oxford and Cambridge colleges, which wield enormous power and are subject to no democratic control at all; and partly from the extreme—and unnecessary—complication of the machinery for administering education, which means that usually the only way to get something done is to wriggle oneself or wangle oneself into a key position—and the people who are prepared to do that wriggling and wangling are not people we want to have taking decisions for us. We must find means of bringing higher education more directly under the control of the people—with Parliament, for example, having more direct say about matters of general policy; and at the local level, with more influence in policy matters given to local Councils, trade unions and—I fear we must at present concede—Chambers of Commerce; and inside the universities and other institutions, the staff taking a far more active part in deciding policy.

My final point—and this is concerned with democracy in the wider sense. As a result of long-continued discussions, the Communist Party is now on the point of publishing a policy for higher education. It will be a good policy, and it will be a practical policy—even within the limitations of capitalism. Let us not think that it is enough. The policy must be put into action. And that must not be left to academics and educationists, for they are not strong enough. Even if we convinced every academic and every educationist in the country of the correctness of our policy, we should still not be strong enough to get it put into practice. We are up against an old order that has a vested interest in restricting the scale of higher education, in preserving its class bias and in keeping its narrow specialist form. There is only one force that is capable of defeating that vested interest—and that force is the Labour movement. We have to take this policy of ours to all organisations of the Labour movement, show them that what we are demanding is in their interests, and get the mighty power of the Labour movement to exert itself to create a new higher education that will help carry humanity forward to heights as yet undreamed of.

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The Bicentenary of Robert Burns

Hugh MacDiarmid

THE literati of Edinburgh counselled Burns that if he persisted in writing in Scots he would restrict his reading public to a fraction of the Scottish population whereas by writing in English he would reach an immensely greater public, not only in Great Britain but throughout the English-speaking world. Burns continued to write for the most part in Scots, and, contrary to the predictions of Edinburgh's literary gentlemen, achieved a greater international reputation perhaps than any other poet. It was very fitting too that one of his poems in the despised Scots vernacular—*Auld Lang Syne*—should have become the great anthem of social amity in every part of the world. It is, like much of Burns' best work, untranslatable into English without an almost complete loss of its quality. Burns in this way demonstrated most triumphantly the truth of Zhdanov's declaration that "Internationalism is born not of a belittlement and impoverishment of national art; on the contrary, internationalism is born where national art flourishes. To forget this truth means to lose the guiding line, to lose one's personality, to become kinless cosmopolitans. It is impossible to be an internationalist without being a genuine patriot of one's own country. If at the root of internationalism lies a respect for other peoples, one cannot be an internationalist without respecting and loving one's own people. The cosmopolitan formalists, who feel no ties of kinship or love of country, cultivate an indifference towards national independence. He who is indifferent to the destinies of his country will be equally indifferent towards national sovereignty, and prepared to relinquish it, which can be in the interests only of the reactionary adventurers who would shape the destinies of the people to suit their own ends so that they might without hindrance sell the national sovereignty of their country.

"The political significance of the 'elimination' of links with the surrounding world, which is so widely propagated by the formalists and which in effect means a complete indifference to the destinies and the sovereignty of one's country can be summed up as follows: the formalist artists, whether they realise it or not, objectively render service to international reaction. Political neutrality—such is the deceitful form which conceals the reactionary political essence of decadent art. The literature of the countries which gave the world Burns, Byron and Dickens, Stendhal and Balzac, Mark Twain and Walt Whitman is now the hunting ground of decadents who are using this field of human thought to produce ideological poison which vitiates the minds of people, and, in the first place, of the intelligentsia. These manufacturers of poison are attempting to gain a monopoly in the realm of artistic creative endeavour. The formalists' panegyric of 'free art' and their onslaught against so-called 'guided' art stem from their attempts to gain this monopoly. By 'freedom of art' they understand, as has been very correctly pointed out by Louis Aragon, their own freedom to indulge in reactionary propaganda and their denial of democratic writers' rights to self-expression. The French poet, Pierre Emmanuel, who took part in the Resistance Movement, has remarked that it is precisely those that would obtain control of art who protest demagogically and most vociferously against any so-called 'guidance' being imposed upon art."

As Ellis Roberts, comparing Richard Burton and Charles Doughty (the declared Communist who has been despised and neglected by all the spokesmen of official English literature, and accused of "putting back the hands of the clock" by reverting to a strongly re-Anglo-Saxonised English for his great epic poems, just as Burns reverted from English to Scots): "The instinct to imitate, to cloak your own convictions, and follow alien and perhaps disliked conventions, is based on a deep distrust of human brotherhood. The man who really believes that the distinctions of race, colour, and language are ultimately less important than the fact of our common humanity is never afraid to admit the reality and significance of these distinctions; the man who minimises the reality of the distinctions in the human family is the man who at bottom suspects them of having a terribly potent force, a force stronger than that of the brotherhood which is human nature's indefeasible privilege."

Writers using the Scots vernacular today are

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counselled and denounced just as Burns was. But, as a recent writer says, "It may be objected that an encouragement of regional or dialect poetry must be a sign of, and in any case will encourage, weakness and decadence in the 'central language', the language of the capital. If poets in Edinburgh write in Scots, in fact, that means that poets in London are losing their grip. The opposite is true. When the 'central language' (or the official dialect of the Universities and the capital) is in a healthy state it encourages commerce not only with its own dialect, but with many foreign languages. This is certainly true of the English of the Elizabethan drama. On the other hand, the fear of such external and internal commerce, the narrow standardisation of language—the kind of fossilising influence which Fowler, great and good man though he was, does represent—is debilitating, and in the long run leads to the correct but thin 'mandarin' prose of much literary journalism today and at a lower level to the gobbledygook of Government departments. The time may have come for English to enter into daring new relationships with what foreign influences it can assimilate; with all its own dialects, and with the Scots language, which is not merely a dialect but a sister tongue, already great in the pages of Henryson, Dunbar and Gavin Douglas; and with its own past, with the English of the Middle Ages, and perhaps even with Anglo-Saxon. Poetry needs every resource of language, for its purposes are various, the technical effects it aims at beyond enumeration."

That last phrase calls to mind Walt Whitman's declaration, which not only remains true but is the most important fact with regard to the present condition, and prospect, of poetry, viz: "Think of the petty environage and limited area of the poets of past or present Europe, no matter how great their genius. Think of the absence, and ignorance in all cases hitherto, of the multitudinousness, vitality, and the unprecedented stimulants of today and here. It almost seems as if a poetry with cosmic and dynamic features of magnitude and limitlessness suitable to the human soul were never possible before. It is certain that a poetry of absolute faith and equality for the use of the democratic masses never was."

A Great Poet?

Burns came as near to that perhaps as any poet has yet done. Nevertheless it may be asked if he was a great poet—or simply a great song-writer as distinct from poet, if that distinction holds. Certainly he is very different in kind, as well as degree, from those who are accounted the world's greatest poets, and many of these, no matter how greatly they admired Burns, have denied him a place in their company. Why, and are they right? It must be noted that they are English poets and as Sir Maurice Bowra and others have pointed out many of the greatest English poets have had no European influence whatever, and that although Continental poets may influence English poets there is no reciprocity—it is a one-way traffic. Again it is held that English poetry is so peculiarly a function of the English language that it has virtually no counterpart at all in the poetry of any other European country. Certainly three Scottish poets — Scott, Byron, and "Ossian" Macpherson—influenced the literatures of Europe, and further afield, to a far greater extent and more seminally, than all the English poets put together, not excluding Shakespeare. In this connection, the late Professor W. J. Entwhistle's statement, "I believe that the aesthetic value of popular poetry, if we are to measure by an absolute poetic standard, is habitually overrated, perhaps mainly from reasons of sentiment. If we are to measure by an absolute poetic standard—and if, perchance, such a standard exists! The classic and the critic demand the application of such standards; but the search for a poetry that shall be pure dissolves even the greatest works into unrecognisable fragments. . . . The poetry of the commonalty we neither produce nor admire." Yet, as he goes on to point out: "The greatest poets have written neither to extrovert their personalities nor to comply with the demands of taste, but to voice the common thought of masses of men. So Homer has been, in a sense, the voice of the Hellenes, and Virgil of Imperial Rome; and Spenser and Milton gave utterance to a Puritanism, either sweetly reasonable or embattled and dogmatic. There have been great poems which can be assessed as 'pure poetry', such as the *Orlando Furioso;* but to the men of the sixteenth century Ariosto's masterpiece seemed wanting in substance or seriousness. We cannot be sure that it expressed something clamouring for utterance:

> 'Glory and generous shame,
> The unconquerable mind,
> and Freedom's holy flame.

"But these are the themes of a 'God-gifted organ-voice'; and these, rather than absolute perfection, assure survival in literature and common, fundamental, moving themes of this kind inspire the best of the ballads.... It has been worth while to recreate them time and again throughout the centuries, since on each single occasion they have signified something to their unlettered hearers and have moved them more than with a trumpet. It is a glory not often achieved by the great artistic

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poets, and when achieved, it is through some partial endowment of the generous ballad simplicity."

So it does not matter whether Swinburne was right or not when he said:

> "But Chaucer's daisy shines a star
> Above his ploughshare's reach to mar
> And mightier vision gave Dunbar
> More strenuous wing."

and declared that Villon won "a crown of starrier flame . . . than Burns may claim." Nor yet that Walt Whitman thought "Burns is not at all great in the sense that Isaiah and Aeschylus and the book of Job are unquestionably great—is not to be mentioned with Shakespeare—hardly even with Tennyson or Emerson, yet he has a nestling niche of his own, all fragrant, fond, and quaint, and homely—a lodge built near but outside the mighty temple of the gods of song and art." It may have been mainly nationalist pride which led a Scottish poetess to call for

> "Endless immeasurable love to him
> Who made our land a lyric for the World,"

or caused another Scottish poet to issue the warning to English speakers at Burns suppers:

> "Rasp not a condescending, alien tongue
> With the rugged metre of his favourite song,
> As those who bend a peasant to address,
> By the mere act implying something less,
> In his own dialect. Bards of funerals,
> Abstain beside this grave! And yet they come!
> The corpse has warmth enough in it to heat
> A cold invention."

Scotland's Songs

Burns' work consists very largely of songs, and songs are of course nearer to the people than other forms of poetry. But if it is suggested that Burns' tremendous world-wide repute is due to his songs, it must be remembered that while Scotland has one of the finest treasuries of popular song in the world, both in Scots and in Gaelic, only a very small portion of these are known to the majority of people and only certain favourites regularly sung by concert platform singers—and these very questionably better songs than many others relatively unknown. Scottish people are generally supposed by themselves and others to take great pride in their tradition of song, yet it is true that within the past two or three years the School of Scottish Studies of Edinburgh University has made tape-recordings of thousands of Scots and Gaelic songs and ballads, most of them hitherto unpublished, which had been transmitted orally down the generations and had become available only on the lips of a few old people. All this great treasure of song must have been lost in a few years' time if the tape-recorder had not come to the rescue at the eleventh hour. That fact hardly bears out the claim that the Scottish people take great pride in their heritage of song. It is true of Scotland as Mr. Michael Tippett, the composer, wrote recently of the Western world in general: "We all know that the big public is extremely conservative, and willing to ring the changes on a few beloved works till the end of time. So that our concert life, through the taste of this public, suffers from a kind of inertia of sensibility, that seems to want no musical experience whatever that it does not already know." It is, however, the financially-dictated competition among concert vocalists that is responsible—and not the public. These concert vocalists play safe. They will risk nothing.

It is of special interest to reflect, in this connection of bridging the gulf between the people and the arts, on the experience of those responsible for the Orquesta Sinfonica de Mexico in presenting concerts for workers and peasants to whom the world of music had previously been almost wholly inaccessible. Painting had been the forerunner and, from the first, towering figures of Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros went for inspiration to the art of the people—to the ancient manuscripts and monuments of the Aztecs, Mayans, and other Indian peoples, to the popular wood-cuts of Posada, the Goya of Mexico, and to the paintings on the walls of the pulque shops (saloons) everywhere in Mexico. "We musicians of the younger generation," writes Carlos Chavez, "sought to create a vigorous art that would stem from the people and would reach out to the people. We felt that we had to restore the heritage of honest feeling to our own popular songs, marches, and dances. At the same time we had to reveal the universal repertory of Beethoven and Bach and Wagner and others." And what did they find? The following is especially apt to my argument here. "The music that moved them to applaud and the music that left them unmoved were both surprising. We played once a Haydn symphony that to most experienced ears is charming and irresistible in its lightness, simplicity and gaiety. Our audience in the park on the outskirts of Mexico City behaved as if poor old Papa Haydn were a long-winded soporific orator. Another time we played Stravinsky. His music is difficult, so I thought, in its intricate rhythms and harmonies. But our surprising audience behaved as if they

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had been brought up on nothing but a diet of dissonance, atonality, and rhythms that changed with bewildering uncertainty. They were delighted with Stravinsky." So with dancing too. Anna Sokolow in introducing modern methods of choreography and novel dance techniques for the first time into Mexico found that working class pupils in that stronghold of folk-lore and ritual took to them readily and without any difficulty of adjustment. It is exactly what the group of intellectual girls defying tradition and founding an association called Anggana Raras in Java with R. M. Kordat as leader have (in dancing) done in another part of the world, influenced, as their spokesman R. Abdul Latief says, by what he calls the "new and young idea: back to your own culture, developing it in modern direction."

The Burns Movement does not want any such continuation of Burns' work and its application to changing conditions of life. Burns took settings for his songs where he could find them and not infrequently these were quite inappropriate to the spirit of the words. Yet our unthinking conventionalists, terrified of anything with life in it, will have no more to do with Francis George Scott's splendid resettings of Burns' songs (which constitute actually the finest tribute that has ever been paid to Burns) than the Swedes would tolerate the taking of any like liberties with Carl Michael Bellman, the famous Swedish poet and singer of the eighteenth century, although his drinking song, "To the Galatians", for example, ambles along as amiably as a glass of milk, and has no kick in it whatever despite the allusions in the text to "rich brown ale" and "Swedish punch", and it would be easy to think of this song with a different rhythmic emphasis, a brisker tempo, a sensation of the swing and vigour of the quick dotted eight, and not the lilting, languishing beat of the pastorale six-eight time. Similar strictures must be passed on many more of his songs, though Bellman (the type of man I like best, for, like Mrs. E. M. Forster, I am "with the old Scotsman who wanted less chastity and more delicacy" all the time) lived recklessly with a God-given abhorrence of the smug, secure, and systematic, wasted his substance, consorted on equal terms with scholiasts, tavernkeepers, nobles and lights-o'-love of high and low degree, yet looking to him for the vigorous racy semi-Rabelaisian semi-Robert Burns sort of thing we legitimately expect we are woefully disappointed; he is betrayed by a bad musical tradition—as Burns' poem was betrayed by the utterly alien and quite inappropriate traditional setting of "Scots Wha Ha'e" against which, nevertheless, F. G. Scott's infinitely better re-setting can make no headway.

The End of an Historical Period

Burns like many great geniuses came at the end of an historical period, which he summed up and crowned. But he introduced no new initiatives into Scots poetry. The conditions of life in Scotland have changed out of all recognition in the interval since his death. His poetry was mainly concerned with an old rural Scotland that nobody wishes back again. Yet a nostalgia for it informs almost all the poetry and songs with any big popular appeal. The industrial revolution is hardly heralded in Burns' work, yet Scotland is today one of the most highly industrialised countries in Europe and two-thirds of its population are squeezed into the narrow industrial belt, while hundreds of thousands of acres are depopulated and derelict. Poetry must always be renewed, and it is the renewal which is always an affront to a public conditioned with difficulty to a previous phase. Shelley put his finger on the essential nature of this process of renewal when he wrote that the language of poetry "is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until words, which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions and classes of thought, instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then, if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganised, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse." Which is as much as to say that new poetry with a new and direct approach to life is essential if mankind is to remain alert.

The Burns clubs, however, have regarded Burns as the be-all and end-all of poetry and refused to tolerate anything that was not an obvious imitation of Burns. So Scots poetry from Burns' death until recently has consisted almost exclusively of imitative doggerel, mawkishly sentimental, a-political, and wholly lacking in Burns' own public spirit and gifts of satire and invective. The fault of the Burns Cult has been to conceive poetry as a static thing, established by Burns once and for all, and no more admitting change than the laws of the Medes and the Persians. Burns was not a solitary phenomenon but owed a great deal to his predecessors. Yet Scottish literature is not taught in our schools and colleges where the very different literature of England has a virtual monopoly; nor is the Scots language taught, though as a consequence it is ceasing to be spoken by or known to most of our people, and that means that not only Burns' work, but the great Scots poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and a large portion of our best ballads, and no inconsiderable part of the best prose in our literature and most of our liveliest drama, is becoming unintelligible.

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They do not understand when they hear it, and when it is printed they find it too unfamiliar to read. Now Burns would never have applied himself as he did to his great task if he had imagined that Scots poetry, and the Scots language, would end with himself. On the contrary, he declared expressly that he looked forward to successive generations of bards carrying on the good work. Even in his own day, however, much of Burns' work was archaic and looked backward to vanished conditions. The tremendous revolution in Scottish life since Burns' day must be—and is only now belatedly being—reflected in our poetry. To see Burns in his proper historical setting, and reappreciate his work in the light of the problems and requirements of Scottish life and literature today, will supply all the needed vitality to secure the unexhausted momentum of the Burns Movement. Over 3,000 books have been published about Burns, but an Edinburgh University journal is right when it says that only with recent volumes by Dr. David Daiches has "justice at last, on the level of first class scholarship and criticism, been done to the whole range of Burns' poetical work" and that this "is a powerful blast of the trumpet of truth and commonsense against the humbug and bunkum of a myriad muddle-headed Burns celebrators. May it herald a widespread desire to reach a genuine appreciation of our national poet."

It should also be remembered that all the best biographies and critical studies of Burns have been, not by Scots, but by American, German, and French authors. More important still is the need to realise that if the Scots language is allowed to disappear, with it will also disappear our great tradition of song, to which English literature has no counterpart, since we owe it to the open Scots vowels and clipped English speech can in no way vie with that as a medium for song.

Recover Burns for the People

A determined attempt must be made at long last to recover Burns for the people, for the Burns Clubs have few working class members, but are the preserves of lawyers, bankers, ministers, teachers, gentry and the officer class. As a consequence, the worst error of Burnsians to date has been a practically unanimous practice of substituting "appreciation" for a truly historical presentation, and, along with that, a deplorable concentration on Burns' quite undistinguished (and greatly exaggerated) love affairs and alcoholic habits for a genuine and informed concern with his poetry. Little of real worth wins through the English filter and to pose Burns and his work against the background of English literature is hopelessly misleading. Burns' work represented the second great attempt to re-base our literature on its native foundation and carry it to fresh heights of achievement in keeping with contemporary requirements. A third such attempt is under way today and looks like being more successful than its two predecessors. That is because there is now mass support for its indispensable political corollary—the recovery of Scottish independence. Such an endeavour is obviously the only true tribute to Burns, and is very different from what has been the practice of the World Burns Movement in general, for Burns himself wrote: "Alas! I have often said to myself—What are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the Union that can counterbalance the annihilation of her independence and even of her very name?"

Burns' "Immortal Memory" could very easily suffer a drastic diminishment. That has happened before with another Scottish poet, Sir David Lyndsay. "Scotland long remembered him. During the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries upwards of twenty editions of his works were published. His verses were on almost every tongue. Until Burns appeared he was in fact *the* poet of the Scottish people."

Already Burns' public in Scotland is being whittled away in like fashion. A recent broadcast interview with a random batch of Scottish men and women showed an almost complete lack of knowledge of even his best known poems, and a corresponding ignorance of the meaning of many of the Scots words. This is general. When I was a boy Burns' poems were to be found in almost every house alongside the family Bible, and most people could recite yards of his verse. I am afraid that neither of these conditions is to be found today save in a small minority of cases. How could it be otherwise? The Burns Movement up to now has based itself on an exaggerated enthusiasm for certain sentimental elements in Burns to the exclusion of any appreciation of that stupendous element in him which ensures his immortality. An element—it cannot be overstressed—utterly and forever irreconcilable with the political, religious, social, and all the other bearings and elements of the personalities and lives of 99.9 per cent of his yearly panegyrists. Burns Cult, forsooth! It has denied his spirit to honour his name. It has denied his poetry to laud his amours. It has preserved his furniture and repelled his message. It has built itself up on the progressive refusal of his lead in regard to Scottish politics, Scottish literature and the Scottish tongue. It knows nothing about him or his work—or the work that should be done in continuance of his—except the stupid and

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stereotyped sentiments it belches out annually. It is an organisation designed to prevent any further renaissance of the Scottish spirit such as he himself encompassed, and in his name it treats all who would attempt to renew his spirit and carry on his work on the magnificent basis he himself provided as he was treated by the official circles of his own day—with obloquy and financial hardship and insecurity and all the dastardly wiles of suave time-servers and trimmers.

The need to follow Burns' lead at long last is today a thousand times greater than when he gave it.

We can still affirm the fearless radical spirit of the true Scotland. We can even yet throw off the yoke of all the canting humbug in our midst. We can rise and quit ourselves like men, and make Scotland worthy to have had a Burns—and conscious of it, and we can communicate that consciousness powerfully to the ends of the earth.

We can if we will—if we don't, if we won't, the Burns cult will remain a monstrous monument to Scotland's refusal to follow Burns' lead—a monument to the triumph of his enemies.

> "Until then, Scotland remains—
> A nation which has got
> A lie in her right hand and knows it not."

—the fit land of our Burns "orators" but a scandal and a disgrace to the spirit of Burns himself.

The Right of African Nations to Self-Determination

B. R. Mann

"The King of the Persians sent you not with these gifts because he much desired to become my sworn friend—nor is the account which you give of yourselves true, for you are come to search out my Kingdom. Also, your King is not a just man, for were he so, he had not coveted a land which is not his own, nor brought slavery on a people who never did him any wrong. . . . Let him thank the gods that they have not put it into the hearts of the sons of the Ethiops to covet countries which do not belong to them. . . ." (*Reply of an Ethiopian King to the Ambassadors of Cambyses, ca.* 525 B.C. — *Herodotus.*)

MORE than two millennia were to pass before any non-African power had acquired sufficient resources successfully to challenge the defiance of the African peoples and their rulers. The combined onslaught of the Western European capitalist powers on the great continent took place at the very end of the nineteenth century.

Their conquest of Africa marked the elimination of the last "blank" spot on their map of the world and thereby the beginning of the end of capitalism. At the very moment of their "triumph" a new era dawned in the east, the epoch of socialism and national liberation. For most of the African peoples national independence is therefore within living memory and the struggle against the colonial conquest in Africa continued without any prolonged hiatus into the world-wide struggle against colonialism and imperialism of today.

Their mounting success in this struggle is illustrated in a most striking manner in the rapidity with which political maps of Africa are becoming out of date. More and more African countries have to be retinted in shades of their own instead of those of the imperialist powers.

Up until recently the future of Africa was generally regarded in Britain as a question of simply transforming each colonial territory within the existing boundaries into an African state instead of a European colonial state. The first doubts of this implicit assumption began to creep in only a few years ago.

After a journey through the Belgian Congo in 1954 Basil Davidson wrote:

> "It is already possible, today, to see through the appearance of things to another central 'problem'—that of knowing whether the Belgian Congo can remain a viable unity in the eyes of its inhabitants, or whether it must break down into ethnically more consistent parts. One may note the same trend elsewhere. Are the Yorubas

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> of Nigeria, or the Ibos or the Hausas members of their own 'nation', of their own nationality, or are they Nigerians? Which will prevail?"

Lord Hailey, in many ways the most broadly representative writer on Africa in Britain, has found himself faced with the same problem of defining the meaning of "nationalism" and of identifying the African nations. In his massive revised *African Survey* 1956 he wrote:

> "In Europe nationalism is a readily recognisable force, even though it may not be easily definable, but as a concept it has associations which make it difficult of application in the conditions of Africa. . . . The Gold Coast has developed a conception of nationhood which though artificial in its origin now has something of the quality of a genuine national ideal" (pp. 251-2).

We have to remind ourselves that his earlier, 1938, *Survey* was written with the object of providing informed guidance to the colonial administrations in their efforts to develop the African territories to appreciate the intellectual revolution implied in his even contemplating such a question. Barely was his 1956 *Survey* off the press, however, when he had already made a further step in his Address to the Africa Bureau anniversary meeting. Here he virtually put aside his hesitations concerning the use of the term "nationalism" in the African context; consequently, he had to come to closer grips with the question of the identity of the African nations.

> " . . . we are almost everywhere made aware not only of a political consciousness on the part of Africans themselves, . . . but we are also continually reminded of the fact that the accidents of history have again and again joined together in a single unit of government a collection of African peoples who have no ethnic affinities and have had no common tradition. . . . Looking to the future, one, of course, realises that African nationalism will continue to press for a strengthening of indigenous representation in the political sphere. . . . But how far can we see further than this?"

In the *Survey* this discussion occupies only a few of the 1,700 pages, yet almost without exception the reviewers have concentrated on it; *The Times* gave it a whole editorial column; the *Daily Telegraph* the best part of a long main page review. F. A. Montague reviewed the work in the *Manchester Guardian* under the significant title "Trying to Keep up with Africa", where he formulated the problem more boldly than Hailey:

> "Discussion of the question is also obscured by the difficulty of defining what constitutes a tribe and what a nation. Tribalism is dead in Great Britain, but Welsh or Scottish nationalism is very much alive. Are the Ashanti, for instance, a tribe forming part of a nation of Ghana, or a nation in a supranational federation? If the Ashanti nationalism is tribalism, then indeed the latter is not on the way out, in Ghana or many other parts of Africa. But it is, surely, true nationalism?"

He called it one of the most important and controversial questions in the future development of modern Africa; he is probably right. It is certainly a question to which any progressive political party or grouping which wishes to give a lead to the British people on how to solve the problems of their relationship with the peoples of Africa will have to give an answer, including the British Communists.

African Nationalism

Let us therefore look at the political events in Africa which have made such a profound impact on British opinion and have brought the question of African nationalism and the African nations so sharply to the forefront.

There is today no African territory without a political emancipation movement so strong as to command attention; that is scarcely in dispute. The intense efforts of the colonial powers to counteract these movements are proof of their existence. These movements are, in the nature of things, directed against the specific colonial power which exercises authority over the given colony. The forms of political organisation are dictated by the shape of the colonial boundaries.

It has therefore appeared that the aspirations of the African peoples can be met by the passing into African hands of the administrations of these territories accompanied by a measure of independence either within or without the Commonwealth (or the French Union, as the case may be). Self-government for the African countries appeared to be the form in which the right of nations to self-determination was expressed in the African context. "Country" was substituted for "nation".

The doubts expressed by the authors referred to are obviously doubts whether this substitution is legitimate, in view of the arbitrary nature of the colonial boundaries which were drawn without the slightest regard to the historically constituted communities of the African peoples. There exists in none of them, e.g., a single national language as distinct from a lingua franca, whether African or European.

One may take the view that such doubts can only hinder the advance of the African peoples, encourage "tribalism" and are thus, however sub-

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consciously and unintentionally, reactionary. It is a curious and very noteworthy fact, however, that these doubts are in direct and open conflict with the Colonial Office views on the matter. One might have thought, e.g. that official circles might have welcomed the repeated appeals of the Ashanti National Liberation Movement for recognition of Ashanti claims of their own national state as a means to divide the peoples of the Gold Coast and so delay the emergence of the state of Ghana. Nothing of the kind happened, however; on the contrary, official circles made no secret of their impatience with these claims. Other examples will spring readily to mind.

What is the explanation for this official attitude which on the surface does not appear to be at all in form? For the answer we must go a little beyond the problems considered so far, from the problems of communities entirely, or almost entirely, contained within the boundaries of a given colony to those of the communities whose countries have been intersected by the colonial boundaries and who have been divided into two, three or even more parts.

Among these the Ewe people have for some years attracted public attention. Their country was at the end of the nineteenth century divided into two parts, one in the British Gold Coast, one in German Togoland; after the war of 1914 the latter was again divided into two, one French, one British, and these later became the two Togoland trusteeship territories under the United Nations.

In spite of this protracted and complex division, which hampers the communications between the members of this historic community of over a million people all speaking the Ewe language, even within individual families and villages, and places great obstacles in the way of the development of their economy, the Ewe people have never given up the desire to be reunited. In recent years this desire has found expression in the votes cast in plebiscites and elections in all three parts of Ewe country for those parties whose policies under the given circumstances promised the speediest realisation of this aim. Invariably, they have found that in the Trusteeship Council obstacles to their unity were erected by the imperialist powers, while support for their aspirations has equally invariably come from the representatives of the socialist nations.

The Somali People

Equally instructive is the case of the Somali people whose country covers the Horn of Africa and stretches from the Haud in Ethiopia to the Tana river in Kenya; almost 3 million Somalis live in that great country which has been theirs from the days of classical antiquity at least. Now, however, it is divided into five parts: the Trusteeship territory of Somalia under Italy, the British Somaliland Protectorate, the small French colony of Somaliland, the Ogaden in Ethiopia and part of the Northern Province of Kenya.

Mr. Bernard Braine, M.P., the Conservative Party's specialist on colonial questions, recently visited the country where he had some disturbing experiences of which he writes in a revealing article in *International Affairs* (October 1958). It was made clear to him in no uncertain fashion that:

> "Despite the division of the Somali people among five administrations and their own intense tribal rivalries, they feel themselves to be one people. They speak the same language, share the same customs and practise the same faith. They desire unification and feel, not without some justification, that they have been held apart by the machinations of the great Powers."

Mr. Braine leaves us in little doubt that he would not object to incorporating independent Somalia in the British empire when Italy gives up the trusteeship over this part of Somali country. Nevertheless, his solution to the Somali problem in no way envisages the creation of an independent Somali state reuniting the entire country in one national state. That is, however, clearly what the Somali people want. Even the small French colony, in spite of threats (now carried out) voted against de Gaulle's constitution in the same strength as Algeria.

Under the most adverse conditions imaginable, historically formed African communities are thus proving their extraordinary cohesion and stability, their attachment to their own countries and people, the dynamic quality of their national aspirations which threatens to wipe the colonial boundaries clean off the African map. It is very understandable that representatives of the colonial powers view this prospect with less equanimity than the Africanisation of the colonial states within the artificial colonial boundaries. In fact they view the preservation and intensification of the artificial character of these boundaries as the *sine qua non* for the continuation of the colonial system under the circumstances which have placed the abolition of this system on the agenda of history.

Only thus can one understand why one and a half years after the emergence of the African state of Ghana on the territory of the former colony of the Gold Coast no appreciable weakening of the colonial system in Africa is to be observed. One might even say that at all events

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Britain's grip on her African colonial empire has, if anything, become stronger. For Ghana is no exception to the rule that not one of the colonial territories in Africa represents in any sense a national state within the meaning of Lenin's use of the term:

> "The formation of *national states,* under which the requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied, is therefore the tendency of every national movement. The deepest economic factors urge towards this goal, and for the whole of Western Europe, nay for the entire civilised world, the *typical* normal state for the capitalist period is, therefore, the national state." (*On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination,* Selected Works IV, p. 251.)

The question which Hailey posed and which has to be faced is a very real one: Since the African nations are not co-extensive with the African states, is the struggle of the African nations for self-determination—that is, among other things, for the creation of their own national states—compatible with the struggle for the transformation of the colonial states with their artificial boundaries into African states? The answer will no doubt depend on the view one takes of the African nations, whether one regards them as part of the civilised world or as mere primitive tribes, clay in the hands of the superior white race or of "exceptional" Africans to be moulded into nations by the states erected on the ruins of the "tribal system".

With much hesitation and many qualifications, the latter view has already been virtually abandoned by Lord Hailey, at least for the present period. It is a view which belongs essentially to the period of empire-building; but it is dying a very slow death and tends to be revived time and again. It was once held of India and for a very long time obscured from view the existence of the Indian civilisation of which modern India is the heir. It cannot be said to be entirely eradicated even in relation to the Asian nations; it is being kept most stubbornly in existence in regard to the nations of Africa.

Afro-Asian Independence Struggles

There can be no doubt that it is the impact of the post-war successes of the liberation struggles of the Asian and African nations which is responsible for the extent to which our views on the place of Europe in the history of the world have been modified. British historians have discovered that there was a time when Britain did not lead the world but was a backwater remote from the centres where civilisation developed; that the Crusades were barbarous incursions with destructive effects on the much superior civilisation of the Arabs; that until a few centuries ago no major invention was made in Europe.

We are at the threshold of a new era of discovery: the discovery of the ancient world of civilisation outside Europe with which the European nations did not catch up until some 200 or 300 years ago, since when their capitalist classes, newly come to power, began the rapid progress of industrialisation, science and technology which was made possible largely by the capital accumulated in the slave trade. The European expansion which followed necessitated an ideology of superiority for the purpose of enlisting the masses without whose active participation it could not be accomplished. The birth of this ideology can be traced with fair accuracy to the middle of the eighteenth century. The era of socialism and colonial liberation is heralding its final collapse.

This ideology is not entirely original, of course; it had its precedent in ancient Greece. But while the Greeks contented themselves with the relatively mild disparagement of everything non-Greek as "barbarian", the modern European-Christian ideology classified the non-European world as "tribes of savage heathens". This had the advantage that it did not have to be demonstrated by any kind of acquaintance with facts; on the contrary, as knowledge increased, the facts were trimmed so as to lessen the impact of their contradiction with the preconceived notion, and when that was no longer possible simply suppressed. An astonishingly large number of Englishmen of all sections of the population to this day associate with the concept "Africa" nothing but a vast primeval jungle inhabited by elephants and pygmies and at most a fringe of savage, warlike tribes of cannibals. The dangers to the British people inherent in the preservation of this absurd caricature of Africa were highlighted when one of the most popular B.B.C. programmes broadcast an anecdote purporting to prove that "it is not so long ago that cannibalism was rife in Africa"; shortly afterwards the shocking events of Nottingham and Notting Hill occurred.

One can therefore hardly overestimate the importance for the British people of the fact that the explorers of the new era of discovery have at length reached Africa and are beginning to explode the Big Lie of the empire builders.* With his now famous dictum that the history of East Africa was written in Chinese porcelain Sir Mortimer Wheeler started a healthy rivalry among

* Cf. e.g. *An Atlas of African History,* J. D. Fage (Edward Arnold, 1958).

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archaeologists and historians which already in the few years since has produced an impressive mass of both new and long-forgotten evidence of the fact that Africa was at all times an integral part of the civilised world ignored by Europe.

Zimbabwe no longer stands a lone enigma, as the pyramids of Gizeh once did, but as merely one of several centres of the African civilisation of the great mining district of central and southern Africa which supplied both other African nations and the world market with gold and iron from the earliest times to the very recent past. Once again we behold with amazement the cities of east and west Africa which for so long were overlooked simply because our minds were not predisposed to acknowledge the evidence of our eyes, and like Mungo Park 160 years ago discover "a prospect of civilisation and magnificence which I little expected to find in the bosom of Africa".

Early African History

All this is, however, only a very modest beginning, only a foretaste of what future research will bring to light and what will emerge when there has been time to sift and date the archaeological and to collate it with the historical evidence. But the weight of it has already been sufficient to breach the last defence of the old view that these civilisations represent "foreign intrusions". and the view of British Marxists that the African peoples are the heirs to the great civilisations of their own past has been amply confirmed.

It would be naive to assume that this process will continue unchecked, that no efforts need to be made to encourage and stimulate further research into the history of the African civilisations before their destruction by the European conquest at the end of the nineteenth century (or earlier, in the case of South Africa). It is all too evident that the myth of the "primitive tribes", so essential for the maintenance of European domination over Africa, would suffer irreparably if the results of this research were to become widely known. It is hardly an accident that a popular journalist who falls into no known category of "undesirable immigrants" was for the first time denied access to several African territories when he announced his intention to devote his stay to research into African history.

Nor would it do to underestimate the extent to which the myth is still believed. It has been firmly, methodically and skilfully planted in the minds of two generations and has coloured the outlook of every administrator, economist, anthropologist or mere visitor before they ever had the opportunity to see Africa. It has been sanctified with the aura of scientifically established "truth".

No single person would deserve the title of chief architect of the myth more than Sir Harry Johnston, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., D.Sc. He lent to it his prestige as a botanist, zoologist and linguist and wrote the copious textbooks which relegated all the genuine knowledge of African *society* assembled in earlier periods into complete oblivion.

Johnston's talent for making his speculations seem plausible blotted the critical faculty out of the minds of Africanists to the extent that for long they disbelieved the evidence of their own eyes; every trace of African civilisation that had survived destruction was ignored: it could not be accepted because this was Africa, the home of the "lowest tribes of humanity". His influence was the more far reaching since he managed to convey the impression that he was one of the more liberally minded of his contemporaries.

How he achieved this distinction is revealed in Roland Oliver's biography *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa.* In instance after instance, by comparing Johnston's private diary with his printed work and with despatches from the files of Whitehall, Oliver convicts Johnston of being an habitual liar. He lied in all honesty, out of a sense of mission: "He believed in evolution as in a God, and himself as its devoted, and perhaps its only intelligent servant". The expansion of English influence (he despised the Scots) "should open the eyes of the brutish savage to the existence of a higher state of culture and prepare them for the approach of civilisation". At the age of twenty-one he made up his mind to become an active agent for the extension of the empire, before he had even a glimpse of the interior of Africa.

In the course of his short and intermittent career as a modern "Persian ambassador" he repeatedly forced the pace of the scramble and with resolution and singular lawlessness waged a personal war on the African middleman "who is resolved to prevent any intercommunication between the white traders on the coast and the industrious tribes of the interior". For the greater glory and profit of English finance capital the African capitalist class was exterminated.

Throughout, Johnston's acquaintance with African society remained superficial; the only friend he ever made, right at the end of his African career, was Sir Apollo Kagwa. One should seriously examine whether this exceptional degree of acquaintance was not alone responsible for his view of Buganda as "exceptional". Even so, he did not allow it to modify his preconceived views except to admit that the period of time

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required to "civilise" the black race might be shorter than he had originally thought.

Oliver's revelations about Johnston, the more convincing because written by one who remains a fervent admirer of the man, make it imperative to subject all writing on Africa which has been under the influence of ideas like his to the most searching critical analysis. If we are ever to restore the connected picture of African history we must endeavour to penetrate to the historical truth through the appearances created by a biased presentation. We must be prepared to find this truth turning out to be radically different from what we may have thought in the past; whether, in particular, there were any genuine tribes at all in Africa a long time before the conquest is now seriously in doubt.

Naturally, this question is of the most profound significance for the question of the African nations. At present the prospect is that in progressive British thought, at least, the last obstacles and hesitations to the recognition of the African nations will, perhaps soon, be swept away. It will become clear that not the accidental conglomerations of nations and parts of nations in the ephemeral colonial frontiers, but the African communities which in the course of their long history have developed their national languages and cultures, built up their economic links within their own national boundaries, demand recognition as nations entitled to erect their own national states.

In the conditions of Africa this is bound to mean that the African nations will inevitably have to raise the question of the colonial frontiers:

> ". . . the principal question, the very question which the imperialist bourgeoisie will not permit to be discussed, namely the question of the *frontiers of a state* which is built upon the oppression of nations . . . the bourgeoisie will willingly promise 'national equality' and 'national autonomy', if only the proletariat remains within the framework of legality and peacefully submits to the bourgeoisie on the question of the state *frontiers*!" (Lenin, Selected Works V, p. 287).

But at what point in the struggle for liberation this question has to be raised, how the African nations are to co-ordinate their political movements and to combine the fight for their individual self-determination with that against the particular colonial power which is holding them in colonial subjection is a question entirely for the African nations themselves to decide. There is absolutely no occasion to express fears or doubts in the wisdom of these nations.

An Old Problem Re-Discussed

Bert Ramelson

THE Jewish problem is not the same as the problem of Israel—it existed centuries before Zionism or an Israeli State were even thought of. Nor is it the problem of Jewish culture—with the single exception of the Hitlerite era, the Jewish problem was probably at its sharpest in periods when Yiddish culture and Yiddish as a language were born and developing.

The essence of the problem is the widespread barbaric practice of anti-Semitism — social, political and economical discrimination (at times accompanied by physical persecution) against Jews, for no reason other than that they are Jews.

It is true that the nature and degree of discrimination against Jews has varied and still varies from time to time and from country to country. Thus at one extreme we have the pogroms in Tsarist Russia and the inhuman Nazi attempt at genocide; at the other there has been the exclusion of Jews from snob public schools, social clubs and certain residential areas.

The core of the problem is how to put an end to anti-Semitism and create conditions in which the Jew can enjoy real equality (social, political and economic) with the non-Jew in the country of his birth.

Until fairly recently, historically speaking, it was generally accepted by Jew and non-Jew alike that the solution lay in the extension and broadening of democracy. It was assumed that the limitations of democracy resulted in depriving various sections of society of certain rights—that is, discrimination against them—and that the position of the Jews was merely an extreme example of a general phenomenon.

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Experience confirmed this approach. To the extent that the people's struggle succeeded in widening democracy and extending the rights of the people as a whole, to that extent there was greater tolerance towards the Jews; legal restrictions were removed, and social and economic discrimination against them were reduced. Anti-Semitism was sharpest in countries like Tsarist Russia and Eastern Europe where even bourgeois democracy was weak or non-existent; while relative tolerance was achieved in America and Western Europe, where the people's struggle had pushed forward the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Anti-Semitism, however — as typified in the Dreyfus trial in France—began to emerge again in the West at the end of the nineteenth century. This re-emergence was no historical accident: it came at the time when imperialism began to develop, marking the end of the era when capitalism was the vehicle for the extension of democracy. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was at that time too that doubts about the democratic solution to anti-Semitism began to appear, and that political Zionism was born.

The approach of the international socialist movement to the problem was different from the generally accepted approach, in that the socialists held that the economic and class basis of capitalist society fostered prejudice and discrimination, hindered the growth of democracy and constantly endangered the democratic gains which had already been won.

Because of this class approach, the socialist and working class movement inevitably assumed the leadership in the struggle for the extension of democracy and against anti-Semitism. The socialist view was that the Jewish problem could only be ultimately and permanently solved by the victory of socialism, by ending capitalist class society, which was the root of the problem at the present stage.

Recent history confirms the validity of this approach. The tragic fate which overtook the Jews in Europe in the 1930's and 1940's was the result of the ruthless destruction by imperialism in crisis of all the democratic gains won by the people, through the imposition of fascism.

On the other hand, the victory of the 1917 socialist revolution created for the Jews, in a country which used to be the hotbed of anti-Semitism, entirely new conditions. As Dr. Nahum Goldman—American president of the World Jewish Congress—stated in his address to the World Executive Council of the Congress at its Geneva meeting on July 23rd, 1958:

> "Nobody accuses Soviet Russia of being anti-Semitic: the equality of rights which the Soviet Constitution grants to all citizens and all minorities applies also to Jews."

The Nationalist Trend

While therefore the democratic solution of the problem held undisputed sway up to the end of last century, a new trend arose parallel with the rise of imperialism, a trend which sought the solution in Jewish nationalism, whose underlying philosophy is Zionism.

Especially following the emergence of fascism in the 1930's, Zionism made a tremendous impact on the minds of many Jews. The basic assumption of Zionism is that there can be no hope of ever eliminating anti-Semitism under any system. For it, therefore, the only solution is the segregation of Jews from non-Jews, to be carried out by the "ingathering" of all Jews to some territorial base. Originally, Patagonia and British East Africa were considered, but the final decision was on Palestine, where a Jewish State was to be established.

Zionism is essentially a philosophy of despair, or refusal to believe that prejudices—which are in fact products of a specific social order—can ever be overcome by the people. It is a philosophy rooted in mysticism—anti-Semitism is seen as an innate, and therefore incurable, characteristic of Gentiles. The very circumstances in which Zionism was born illustrate the despair which is its outstanding feature.

Dr. Herzl, the founder of Zionism, was a completely assimilated Austrian Jew. In the course of his professional duties as a journalist, he covered the trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a completely assimilated French Jew. It was the shock of this anti-Semitic frame-up in what was considered an advanced European democracy which made him lose faith in democracy as a solution to the Jewish problem, and led him to evolve the theory of Jewish nationalism—Zionism.

The revelation of the Nazi horrors and the barbaric slaughter of six million Jews had a similar effect amongst Jewish workers and small tradesmen in the after-war period, although it was not the failure of democracy that led to these horrors, but the destruction of democracy by the ruling class.

In proposing a national solution to the Jewish problem, Zionism is compelled to argue that the Jews are a nation, although they have no common territory, language, economy, culture or way of life—which are the essential prerequisites of nationhood. They are not a nation, but the product of specific historical conditions.

During the two thousand years since their

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dispersal a highly organised religion has played a major part in holding them together with a sense of community, often in the face of persecution. This religious system has been closely associated with the endeavour to maintain racial purity. Thus Jewish descent as well as religion has played a part in the maintenance of Jewry as a distinctive group; even including those among whom the practice of the Jewish religion has been abandoned. But with modern conditions and intermingling, the distinction between Jew and non-Jew begins to disappear. Anti-Semitism too has always been the other major force in keeping up the differentiation between the Jews and the non-Jews among whom they lived, and created a common defensive bond between Jews in all countries. With the waning of religion in recent times, anti-Semitism has become the most important single factor in maintaining the Jews as an entity.

In spite, however, of all the historical factors which have tended to keep Jews as a distinctive group among different peoples, they do not form a nation.

Today, however, an *Israeli* nation is rapidly emerging in the State of Israel, with its common territory, national market, language, culture and way of life. There is a great deal of understandable sympathy among Jews in other countries towards Israel, but they are not Israelis.

Because Zionism as an ideology is based on false premises, it is not only incapable of solving the real problems of the Jews, but makes these problems more difficult and hinders their solution. The false theory of Jewish nationhood results, for example, in:

(a) Making aliens of the overwhelming majority of Jews in the countries where they were born and brought up, and towards whose culture they have made a considerable contribution. This plays into the hands of the anti-Semites who also preach that the Jews are "foreigners" and should move out or be moved out.

(b) The withdrawal of many Jews from the political struggle of the working class, not only leading to self-imposed isolation, but depriving the working class of valuable help in the fight for socialism.

(c) Weakening the class sense of Jews by preaching a non-existent "common national interest" involving class collaboration within Jewry; and seeking support for imperialism on the ground of "national interest" (for example, the widespread support among Jewish workers for the Suez aggression was in glaring contrast to the strong opposition in the general Labour movement).

There is therefore no reason why Communists should change the view of Zionism which they have held hitherto—namely, that it is a reactionary ideology which can only divert Jews from participation in the only struggle capable of solving their problems—the struggle for socialism.

Israel

It is essential to distinguish between Zionism and Israel. Zionism, as shown above, is an ideology, whereas the Israeli State is a fact. As a State, Israel has all the attributes of State-hood—defined territorial boundaries, a national market, a rapidly developing national language (Hebrew) replacing the many mother tongues of its Jewish inhabitants, and the emergence of a distinct Israeli culture.

The Arabs remaining in Israel, although formally Israeli citizens, but with second-class rights (subject to military rule, pass laws etc.), are an oppressed national minority.

It can be said that the factors enumerated above, which have operated in Israel for something like a quarter of a century, have started a process which is now nearing completion—the creation of an Israeli nation.

While Zionism undoubtedly played a part in the formation of the State of Israel, it was by no means the only or even the major factor; perhaps the biggest single factor was the policy of British imperialism to further its aims in the Middle East.

What then is our attitude to Israel?

Up to 1947, our policy was clear. We stood for an independent, sovereign Palestinian State with equal rights for all its citizens whether Jew or Arab. We pointed out that the attempt to establish a purely Israeli State could only be achieved with the help of imperialism and would meet with the undying hatred not only of the Palestinian Arabs, but of all Arabs in the Middle East, in whose midst it would have to exist. We argued that the tragedy of Jewish persecution in Europe was no justification for depriving the Palestinian Arabs of their land or their right to a sovereign, national existence in their own homeland. We held that Israel could only solve the problem for a tiny proportion of the world's Jewish population (five out of six Jews still live, and will continue to live, outside Israel), and was therefore not touching the core of the problem.

After the end of the Second World War, however, conditions in that part of the world considerably changed. On the one hand there was a rapid development of the Arab national liberation movement, and on the other there were great waves of Jewish immigration into Palestine following on the monstrous Nazi persecution of Jews

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and the collapse of hopes of any future for the Jews in Europe.

In pursuit of its imperialist policies, British imperialism played off Arab against Jew, repressing Jews and Arabs in turn. The consequence was the rapid growth of movements for independence among both Jews and Arabs. In these circumstances, it seemed that the Palestine question could be solved only on the basis of a common struggle by Arab and Jew against British imperialism and the establishment of a bi-national independent State. At that stage, we advocated such a policy.

In 1947, however, the United Nations decided on the establishment of two States—a Jewish State and an Arab State, with an international zone in Jerusalem—and in the circumstances the decision was supported by our Party.

The Israeli State was set up. But British imperialism, in its desperate efforts to retain its position, and making use of the genuine resentment and fear among the Arab people, conducted a war against Israel in the name of the neighbouring Arab States, whose governments were still under British influence and whose armies were led by British officers.

The result of the war was the defeat of this British imperialist effort, the considerable enlargement of Israeli territory beyond the boundary set in the United Nations resolution of 1947, the annexation of large areas of Palestine by Britain to Jordan, and of the Gaza strip by Egypt; and the fleeing of 900,000 Arab refugees from Palestine to neighbouring Arab countries, where they still live in unimaginable squalor, misery and poverty.

Such in brief were the events leading up to the establishment and consolidation of Israel as a State, and of the Communist Party's policy in relation to it. Everything that has happened since then confirms that our basic approach was correct.

The New Situation

Nevertheless, Marxists must tackle problems as they exist at a particular time, and not as they might have been.

Whatever the rights or wrongs of the past, the central fact in this connection is that Israel exists, and that an Israeli nation is developing. The problem now is how to ensure its continued existence and further development in peace and friendship with its neighbours.

The reason for the hostility to Israel which undoubtedly exists among Arabs is not only the sense that their national rights have been outraged by the establishment of Israel in their homeland through foreign invasion and conquest, and by the driving out of the original inhabitants, but also the fear that the existence of Israel is a constant threat to the realisation of their own national independence. They see Israel as a tool of the imperialists, a constant threat to the independence of its neighbours.

It must be said that the policies of the Israeli Government since 1948 have gone a long way towards confirming this fear rather than diminishing it. Instead of supporting the Arab national liberation movement (the surest way of alleviating Arab suspicion of Israel), the Israeli Government has given repeated support to imperialism in its attempt to suppress it, as the following examples show:

1. In alliance with British and French imperialism, Israel launched the aggressive war against Egypt, which led up to Suez.

2. Israel supported the British and American troop landings in Jordan and Lebanon. Not only did Israel allow British military air transports to use her air space, but her threat to invade Jordan if Hussein was thrown out by the people was the main argument used by the British to justify the occupation of Jordan.

3. Whereas all progressive Arabs rejected the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower doctrine as twin instruments of imperialist aggression in the Middle East, Israel welcomed them.

4. Whereas the orientation of Arab countries fighting for independence is towards the Bandung alliance and friendly relations with the socialist countries, Israel boasts that she is the only reliable ally of imperialism in the Middle East. On every issue in the United Nations, Israel has cast her vote as the United States directed.

5. The disgraceful treatment of the Arab minority as second class citizens adds fuel to the fire.

Israel's expansionist policy was made clear in the Suez war when Ben Gurion boasted that Israel had now conquered territory three times its size and would never give it up. His latest summary of Israel's Middle East policy is that Israel stands for the status quo and will fight to the end against any change in the status quo. This does not square with the recent declaration of his Foreign Minister, Mrs. G. Meir, that in the event of any democratic political change in Jordan Israel would immediately invade Jordan and annex all territory up to the Jordan River. But even a policy of status quo on Israel's part is a policy hostile to the hopes and aspirations of the Arabs. The Arab liberation movement aims precisely to change the status quo, from dependence to independence, and it is understandable that the Arab people should see in Israel's policy a danger to their own independence,

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and look on Israel as an outpost of imperialism in their very midst.

The future of Israel depends on a decisive break with the policies of alignment with imperialism, oppression of the Arab minority, or aims of aggression and expansion; and the substitution for these of a peaceful policy of negotiation with the Arab national liberation movement.

We should give support to the aim of a peaceful settlement which would ensure the just national existence and independence equally of the Israeli people and of the Palestine Arabs. The basis for such a settlement has been provided by the United Nations decision of 1947. A negotiated settlement on this basis would require recognition of the United Nations decision by both sides; peaceful negotiation of boundaries on this basis to ensure the just national rights and State existence of the Israeli people and of the Palestine Arabs; and a just settlement of the refugee problem on the basis of recognising their right to return to their homeland, restitution of their property and adequate compensation.

Such a peaceful settlement would require concessions on both sides. From the Arab side it would require recognition of Israel as an independent State, and abandonment of any attempt to challenge its right of existence. From the side of Israel, it would require recognition of the United Nations decision and readiness to negotiate a peaceful settlement on this basis.

I do not underestimate the difficulties involved; but there is no other solution. The basis of support for such a settlement does exist and is developing on both sides. It has been recognised by responsible leaders of the Arab liberation movement, including President Nasser, and of the Afro-Asian nations in their Bandung Conference resolution on Palestine. It is supported by progressive forces in Israel including the Israeli Communist Party. The Israeli Communist Party is the only political party in Israel which really unites Arab and Jew in its membership and leadership; there is no enmity between Arab and Jewish supporters of the MAKI (Israeli Communist Party). There is evidence that growing numbers of Israelis, becoming aware of the disastrous consequences of present policies, are turning towards such a solution.

The Socialist Solution

Before the cold war, no one dared to challenge the fact that the establishment of working class power in the Soviet Union had succeeded, in a relatively short time, in eliminating anti-Semitism in what used to be the country where anti-Semitism was most widespread.

This fact had a tremendous impact on Jews all over the world. Sympathy with the Soviet Union was general, and socialism as a final solution to the Jewish problem was the dominant trend among Jewish workers and many of the middle class.

Zionism sought to counter this with a ceaseless anti-Soviet campaign, but with little success.

The advent of the cold war, however, and the revelations that amongst the victims of the gross abuse of socialist democracy and legality in the Soviet Union during the period of 1948-53 were many leaders of Jewish cultural life, and that administrative measures were taken in 1948 to close down Jewish cultural institutions, were heaven-sent opportunities, unscrupulously used by Zionists and anti-Soviet Jewish elements, to spread the vilest slanders about the position and status of Jews in the Soviet Union. The most outrageous lie of all was that anti-Semitism was rife in the Soviet Union.

The aim of these campaigns was self-evident—to divert the Jewish working class from the struggle for socialism in the country where they live, and to lead them to the acceptance of Zionism. This campaign, aided and abetted by renegade and revisionist elements, had considerable success.

Such an outrageous lie, without foundation of fact, could not of course be maintained for long—just as the lie about the nationalisation of women in the Soviet Union in the 1920's soon had to be dropped.

As is made abundantly clear by the statement quoted above from Nahum Goldman's Geneva speech last July, anti-Semitism does not exist as a significant phenomenon of Soviet life.

Finding it difficult to maintain this slander, its authors have now turned their efforts to confuse and deceive to the issue of Jewish life and culture in the Soviet Union.

There may be room for controversy as to the correct application of Marxist principles in a given situation; there is less room for controversy as to what are the appropriate Marxist principles; but there can be no serious discussion at all except on the basis of the salient facts. Some of these are:

(1) Yiddish developed over the centuries as the mother-tongue of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe, owing to the persecution of Jews and the enforced segregation in Ghettoes. This compulsory isolation developed a common way of life, tradition and behaviour, and this in turn gave rise to a specific Yiddish culture, whose essence was the depicting of Ghetto life and a yearning for revolt against such intolerable conditions.

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(2) Wherever the Ghetto walls were broken down—as in Western Europe and America—Yiddish ceased to develop and was gradually replaced by the language of the country where the Jews lived. English, French and German became the mother tongues of English, American, French and German Jews.

(3) Similarly, Jewish writers, artists, musicians and actors, both in content and form began to express themselves only in the language of the country where they lived; the themes and ways of life they reflected were indistinguishable from those of their non-Jewish colleagues.

(4) In the period immediately following the socialist revolution, when Yiddish was still the mother tongue and the Ghetto experiences still fresh in the minds of Jews, every facility was given to them in the Soviet Union for the development of Yiddish culture. Freed from the shackles of Tsarism, the new opportunities offered by socialism were fully grasped, the Yiddish culture flourished. This was the case not only in the initial period in the Soviet Union, but still is the case in the present period in the People's Democracies.

(5) With the further development of socialism and the complete emancipation of the Jews, the conditions and memories of the Ghetto disappear into the past. Yiddish ceases to be a living tongue and the basis for a specific culture (expressing a specific Jewish life which no longer exists) rapidly crumbles. The following further quotations from Dr. Nahum Goldman's speech at Geneva last July shows his recognition of this inevitable process:

> "The disappearance of the brutal form of anti-Semitism and the political and economic well-being of most Jewish communities has initiated a system of anonymous disintegration and assimilation which has endangered the basis of our existence in the Diaspora. If this is not evident today on the surface of Jewish life, it is primarily because our generation still lives under the tremendous impact of two great psychological experiences, the Nazi period with the extermination of a third of our people, and the heroic fight resulting in the emergence of the State of Israel. Both these overwhelming experiences have revived and revitalised the Jewish consciousness of millions of Jews. The Nazi experience has created deep feelings of guilt and responsibility; the Israel experience deep emotions of pride and happiness to be a Jew. These experiences, however, determining the psychological structure of our adult generation are losing their impact even for us, but certainly for the young generation for whom the Nazi tragedy will be only a historical memory and the existence of the State of Israel an obvious matter of fact. The more impacts of these two revolutionary experiences of our generation will disappear, the less barriers will remain to Jewish survival. If nothing is being done and the status quo continues a process of silent assimilation will continue, destroying the roots of our existence and undermining the foundations of our survival."

(6) Large concentrations of Jews lived in the bordering cities and towns of the Soviet Union which were overrun by the Nazi aggressors in the early stage of the last war. The humane action of the Soviet Union in giving priority to their evacuation saved millions of Jews from the gas chambers. It also meant, however, the breaking up of concentrated communities and a speeding up of the process of integration.

(7) Jewish cultural and literary works have been made available to all Soviet people by the publication of large editions in Russian translation.

(8) In 1948, during the period of abuse of Soviet democracy and legality, administrative measures were taken which led to the cessation of publication in Yiddish and the closing down of the Yiddish State Theatre. The justification given for these measures was that there was not enough demand to justify such undertakings.

(9) Since then, in the general rectification of past errors, certain developments have taken place. Numerous and well-attended concerts by Jewish artists with Jewish repertoires are being held throughout the Soviet Union. Some publications partly in Yiddish and partly in Russian have appeared. Comrade Danilov, Soviet Deputy Minister of Culture, told a delegation of French Jews, headed by M. Vilner, editor of the Yiddish-French weekly *Presse Nouvelle*, that the question of resuming publication in Yiddish is now under review.

* * *

The Marxist approach to national culture is not only to permit, but to facilitate by every possible means, the fostering and development of all national cultures. Neither financial cost nor the relative smallness of the population of a nationality can be seriously considered as an obstacle to the application of this principle: every nation, large or small, has the absolute right to its fullest development, culturally as well as economically. No one has challenged the fact that this has been and is today Soviet policy.

Confusion arises, however, from treating Yiddish culture as a national culture in the same sense as other national cultures. But as we have seen, the Jews are not a nation, and Yiddish therefore cannot be treated as a national culture.

Experience has shown that whereas the emancipation of an oppressed nation leads to a spurt

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in the development of its national culture, even relative tolerance for the Jews leads to the disintegration of Jewish culture.

The question that is raised is whether Marxists should attempt by artificial means to delay the natural historical process—which to many Jews may be a highly desirable one—of complete cultural integration.

I believe that the general Marxist principles applicable to nations and national cultures have no relevance as far as Yiddish culture is concerned, for the reason that it is not a national culture and is by its very nature transient. My own view is that nothing should be done either to prolong it artificially or to hasten the natural process of its demise.

The Soviet administrative measures of 1948, which closed down Yiddish cultural institutions and organisations in the process of the fight against foreign intervention and counter-revolution, were bound up with the mistaken administrative measures of that period. While their purpose was political, rather than to deal with the cultural question as such, the effect was abruptly and artificially to close down such institutions, in place of leaving the natural process of development to determine the question.

Whether this can be rectified by the re-establishment of the Yiddish State Theatre and opening Yiddish publishing houses is not a question of principle, but can only be decided on the basis of the actual situation, which I am certainly not in a position to evaluate.

The facts to be ascertained (and the Soviet people are the only people able to evaluate them) are whether—as a result of forty years of freedom and equality in all spheres of life, the absence of a Yiddish press and theatre for the last decade (even though due to an incorrect decision) and the dispersal of Jews all over the Soviet Union during the war—sufficient numbers of Jews who speak, read, write Yiddish and feel a need to express themselves in that language, remain in the Soviet Union.

All recent developments show that when a decision is finally taken on this question, it will be one based on such an approach.

On Nationality in Music

Katharine Thomson

THOMAS RUSSELL has raised a number of important problems regarding the nature of music. Perhaps the discussion can be carried a little further by considering them from a somewhat different angle.

When we discussed Zhdanov's report on music ten years ago, we devoted a great deal of attention (perhaps too much) to his attack on formalism, but very little to his remarks on the importance of the national element in music. He appealed, it will be remembered, for music which is "realist and of truthful content, and closely and organically linked with the people and their folk-music and folk-song". We forgot that a very similar appeal had been made many years before by our own national composer, Vaughan Williams, whose death we are now mourning. In his book *National Music* (1934) he wrote: "Any school of national music must be fashioned on the raw material of its national song". And again: "The composer who tries to be cosmopolitan at the outset will fail, not only with the world at large, but with his own people as well." Referring to Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, he maintained that the influence of folk-song in their work "is not noticeable because it is so very plain", and that "what we call the classical idiom is the Teutonic idiom, and it is absolutely as narrowly national as that of Grieg and Mussorgsky". He referred too to Glinka's aim of writing music which would "make the people feel at home". It will be remembered that Zhdanov too quoted from Glinka: "The people create the music; we, the artists, merely arrange." It seems clear that on this vital issue Vaughan Williams and Zhdanov were at one.

How far did Vaughan Williams succeed in his avowed aim of writing music which would make his own people "feel at home"? After the production of *Sir John in Love* by the Birmingham Clarion Singers in 1949, one of the workers who had taken part in it said, "Whenever I hear *Greensleeves* on the wireless now, I think to myself, That's *my* Greensleeves". Many English people, hearing *Linden Lea* for the first time, must have experienced that sense of recognition which Vaughan Williams described himself as feeling when he first heard the English folk-song *Bushes and Briars*: "Here's something I've known all my life, only I didn't know it".

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In Czechoslovakia a great deal of research has been done on the relationship of folk-song to the work of such composers as Smetana and Janacek. Smetana denied that he owed anything to folk-song; yet his music is steeped in it. Janacek, like Vaughan Williams, was a folk-song collector, and his music was consciously based on the idiom of folk-song. Further, he listened carefully to the vocal inflections of popular speech and reproduced them in his music.

Thus, classical music is based on folk-song and through folk-song on speech. This point, which is fundamental to a Marxist understanding of music, could be investigated systematically in the work of the Russian composers, of Verdi in Italy, of Kodaly and Bartok in Hungary; but of course in this country we should be chiefly concerned with the work of our own composers. The relation between speech and song was quite clear to Vaughan Williams. In *National Music* he recalls hearing a wayside preacher whose voice rose and fell, as he became excited, in a definite pattern of notes: A B A G A E. This pattern is found in many English folk-songs, for instance, *Searching for Lambs*. It recurs constantly in his own music—for example, in the London Symphony, the Fifth Symphony, and the prison soliloquy in Act III of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Another of his characteristic themes is based on two groups of rising fourths: D G A D. This is the sequence of the fixed notes in the primitive scale, which, according to Cecil Sharp, are still the more stable notes in the scale of the folk-singer. We find it in many folk-songs, for example, *O no John*. This is the theme which opens the London Symphony; it is prominent again in the Fifth Symphony and in *Pilgrim's Progress,* where it culminates in association with the words, "Be not afraid!"

Besides drawing on folk-songs, Vaughan Williams also drew on Tudor music, and for the same reason. Tudor music, sacred and secular, is derived from folk-song. Thus, the tune of *The Leaves be Greene,* known as *Browning,* was so popular in the sixteenth century that the name "browning" was given to a certain instrumental form consisting of sets of variations on this tune. Some composers introduced it into their masses. It has an affinity with the famous hymn tune by Thomas Tallis, which Vaughan Williams used for his Fantasia and further developed in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Besides drawing on folk-song and on speech itself, Vaughan Williams worked with the conscious aim of making his music "realist and of truthful content". Music, he wrote, is "above all things the art of the common man", because it is able to "grow out of our life in a way that no other art can". As far back as 1912 he had written: "Have we not all about us forms of musical expression which we can take and purify and raise to the level of great art? For instance, the lilt of a chorus at a music-hall joining in a popular song, the children dancing to a barrel-organ, the rousing fervour of a Salvation Army hymn, St. Paul's and a great choir singing in one of its festivals, the Welshmen striking up one of their own hymns whenever they win a goal at an international football match, the cries of street pedlars, the factory girls singing their sentimental songs—have all these nothing to say to us? . . . We must cultivate a sense of musical citizenship. Why should not the musician be the servant of the state and build national monuments like the painter, the writer and the architect?"

All these things are expressed in his own music, which is full of English life—the barrel-organs, the hawkers' cries, and the chimes of Big Ben in the London Symphony, the boxing match in *Hugh the Drover,* the hymn-singing in *Pilgrim's Progress*. His *Sir John in Love* is truer to Shakespeare than Verdi's *Falstaff,* because it is thoroughly English. A deep love for the English countryside—"this precious stone set in a silver sea"—is revealed in the Pastoral Symphony, *The Lark Ascending,* and the Sea Symphony. Nor did he stand aside from political life. It is true that there is a strong mystical element in his work, but that did not prevent him from expressing his horror at the barbarities of fascism in the Fourth Symphony and his hatred of war in his cantata *Dona nobis pacem,* which was banned in Nazi Germany.

In 1930 he wrote that, despite appearances, English folk-song was not dead and that it would live again in new surroundings and under new conditions. Is not this exactly what has happened in the socialist countries? In England, too, the recent revival of interest in folk music on a mass basis shows that, even under the dead weight of capitalism, the traditional music of our people lives on, and that, when we have created the new surroundings and the new conditions, Vaughan Williams's prediction will come true.

But, it may be argued, the social conditions of our people have already changed so much that a style based on folk-song can no longer provide an adequate medium for the expression of our national life. To this it may be replied that, song, like poetry, has grown out of speech, being speech raised to a higher power ("charged with emotion", as Vaughan Williams expressed

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it), and that consequently the melodic line of a folk-song is suggested by the natural flow of the words in the language to which it belongs. The English language is still essentially the same as it was in Shakespeare's time; and, if our spoken language is still the same, why should not the musical language which has grown out of it continue to serve as a medium of communication between the composer and the people?

It was from these premises, which are in complete accord with what Zhdanov said on nationality in music, that Vaughan Williams started out as a young composer to find a way into the hearts of the English people, voicing their joys and their sorrows in war and in peace. What Glinka did for Russia, and Janacek for Czechoslovakia, he has done for England.

The Teaching of History

AT a recent discussion organised by the Historians' Group a teacher outlined, somewhat sardonically, the kind of approach to history of the traditional school syllabus. It opens with man's beginnings but hurries quickly away into early civilisations in the Middle East, arriving as quickly as possible in Greece and Rome where it is possible to recognise decent English types. Happily Rome has the sense to conquer Britain which enables the history course to move to this island and thereafter remain bedded down in a nationalist framework, with only a few excursions into the outside world.

The approach to other countries, when it comes, is chiefly from the angle of colonialism, of imperialism. Once a country ceases to be a colony it drops out of the history books, is ostracised; America is an example. In the nineteenth century, when it becomes impossible to dispute the existence of Europe, some acquaintance is made with continental countries. But the general impression is that they are a niggardly lot, no Magna Carta and always staging revolts. The average child leaves school without any knowledge of the civilisations of Africa, Asia, the Americas; with the notion that human history revolves around the British Isles.

Something of the same kind obtains at the universities. Even today it is possible to get a degree in history without having studied anything beyond the history of Europe; often concentrating on a corner of that, with emphasis on political aspects. Historical research has been greatly extended but, at the same time, it is more and more highly specialised.

University examination requirements, framed in this context, cramp the upper ranges of school history courses. Teachers, who have themselves been through this mill, are increasingly aware of the difficulties this creates when they attempt to achieve a balanced presentation of history.

Yet the historical approach, historical studies, are a vital aspect of education. On this the vast majority of teachers are agreed. Rightly taught, history not only opens children's eyes to the world around them, promotes an understanding of economic and social life, but also brings new perspectives—a realisation of what man has achieved and what society can attain in the future. Moreover, history can be an important bridge between the sciences and the arts, at present so rigidly divided at both school and university.

Teachers, then, want to teach history in a positive way. How can the prevailing academic approach—a reflection of the bourgeois view that history has no meaning, nor purpose, that progress is an out-of-date idea—be combated? What contribution can Marxists make here? These were the questions that came up for discussion.

They arose in a very practical context. For a number of years some teachers have been experimenting in framing a four-year course for secondary schools; one designed to give all children an understanding of historical development in terms relevant to their own experience. In so doing they have come up against various ideas. There is, for instance, the conception that different history courses must be provided for different levels of intelligence; that the average child should have easy doses of social history, while the grammar schools remain wedded to the traditional political and diplomatic history. This approach has been rejected, as also have other partial treatments of history. Such are the "patch" approach which pays attention only to particular features of past societies at a particular stage, and the "line of development" approach which, while it stresses social change, does so only in relation to a few basic human needs, excluding much else that is significant.

"Man in Society"

These have been genuine efforts to bring history alive as the story of human achievement and pro-

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gress, but they have been too limited in scope. This has become clear as increasing attention has been given to the history course, particularly in comprehensive schools. A return has, therefore, been made to the chronological approach, as the necessary framework for studying "man in society". Within this framework history, as a record of man's past, must bring out the many-sidedness of human activity. It must integrate technological, economic, social, political, military, religious and cultural aspects into a single whole, while at the same time emphasising movement and change.

All children should study history in this sense, the same sort of history. In other words every child, when he leaves school or goes on to more specialised work, should do so equipped with a minimum knowledge of the history of his country, ranging from the Stone Age to the present day, in a world setting.

In working out courses on these lines, two main difficulties have arisen. First, though economic and social history have come into their own to a greater or lesser extent, technological history has yet to do so. Even Marxist historians have often paid little attention to changes in technique which are a basic and integral aspect of historical development. Second, there is little material readily available about world history; on the civilisations of the East which played a leading part when Britain was still barbarian, or about peoples who are now emerging from the shadows of colonialism and oppression into the light of world events.

The Marxist view of the place of technology in history was first outlined. It is the technical level of society which determines the development of a corresponding economic and class structure, the broad outline of historical development, however intricate and complex other interrelations may be. This means that the progress of technology must be the basis on which economic and social change is discussed.

In fact, the story of technological change illustrates in the clearest possible way that history is a matter of cause and effect, and, too. of human progress; as opposed to the view that history has nothing to teach, no meaning nor pattern. It is by studying their past in this way that men learn to distinguish the laws governing social development, in the light of which they can interpret and consciously shape the future. This idea should permeate all history teaching.

Today the idea of progress is so out of fashion in academic circles that it is easy to be deflected from this course. Nor is it by any means simple to teach history as a record of human advance. Class societies do not progress smoothly, but often go backwards; so also do different classes engaged in the struggle at different epochs. The dialectics of historical development, in this sense, are too complex to discuss in school. But it is precisely here that the history of technique is so valuable because progress in this field is clear. True, at times there is a standstill, at times some techniques are lost; but others develop and there is never total retrogression.

Having established the fact of advance in the technical field it is possible to disentangle it in others—from living conditions to the writing of philosophy. Whatever the complexity of social life these, taken as a whole, have progressive aspects at different epochs. Then one can discuss in what conditions a society is progressive or reactionary—to get across the key point that no form of society is progressive or reactionary in itself but only in relation to the times. Feudalism is progressive in thirteenth-century Europe but when new technical possibilities outgrow social relations there is regression, pessimism in literature and so on, until a series of revolutions ushers in capitalism. Capitalism pushes technical progress to completely new levels until it in turn becomes reactionary and only socialism can carry society forward.

Today we stand at a new turning point in history. The only past event comparable to the harnessing of nuclear energy is the harnessing of fire, right at the beginning of the human story. Analogies for other scientific-technological advances can only be found either at the beginning of humanity or at the discovery of agriculture. For the transition from class society to classless society, which these technological advances make possible, there is no previous parallel except in the transition from primitive communism to a society based on exploitation. By comparison changes from slavery to feudalism, feudalism to capitalism—shifts of emphasis within class society —are trivial. Prehistory must be more adequately studied if this perspective is to become clear.

World History

The study of world history is also essential for the present generation. The main problems here are those of selection but the history of technique can act as a selective agent. We can study those eras and areas where technical progress was taking place and so pick out certain well-defined parts of the world; not, of course, merely to study their technology but to ask also why this society was technically progressive and then to look at its culture as a whole. When this society became decadent how were its achievements handed on to others?

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In answering this question a framework of world history emerges which fits well into the span of history that can be taught. There are still vast gaps in our knowledge. We know little, for instance, of how the culture of Egypt and Babylon was passed to China, which held the technical lead from about the beginning of the Christian era to the end of the Middle Ages, nor of how Chinese achievements were transmitted to Europe. But there is enough to go on to select topics for study.

A point raised in discussion was the problem of the dominance of the humanist tradition which deliberately underplays technique and over-emphasises literature, rhetoric, the arts. The building of railways in the nineteenth century was as fabulous an achievement in its way as the ancient Gothic cathedrals, but this is never indicated except in such works as Klingender's *Art and the Industrial Revolution*. It is also possible to show that the great engineering projects of the twentieth century are at least as important as political and military events.

In general, while social relations are now treated, the same is not true of the other side of the mode of production, the technical basis. This means there can be no attempt to make the necessary links, to show how improved means of production produce a surplus which allows for exploitation, giving rise to class society with different forms of culture; how, in short, technological advance paves the way for social change.

Yet this approach is concrete, topical and easy for children to understand. From a pedagogical point of view, then, it is the only proper way to teach; this, not with the aim of turning pupils into Marxists but with the object of teaching good history and teaching it effectively. Many teachers are now interested in this aspect, not least because of the demand for special history courses for pupils studying technical subjects and science. But this, in itself, has led to a reassessment of history courses as a whole.

Technique and Social Relations

In discussing technique and social relations it is important not to over-simplify, as Marxists have sometimes tended to do, in too schematic a way. One of the reasons for this is that technique has been considered too much in terms of tools, isolated from scientific concepts, transmitted skills and productive methods. But the opposite danger must also be avoided, the academic trap of saying nothing at all, making no attempt at integration. With children, it is essential to start from a simplification; this provides the necessary basis for wider reading and study, leading to a full picture with all the qualifications.

The importance of co-operation between historians and scientists was underlined, not only because the former want to know about science, but also because the latter are seeking ways of presenting the advance of science historically rather than in the form of isolated facts. Here the value of Bernal's *Science in History* was stressed; as also, throughout, the importance of Lilley's *Men, Machines and History*.

Finally it was recalled that, if there are few problems in treating the earliest periods of human history, this is because of Gordon Childe's work. By way of interpretation and broad generalisation from the facts, in specialist studies and popular books, he has transformed our understanding of man's beginnings. In attempting to do something similar for later periods we become aware of the full significance of the work of a great Marxist historian.

If one way of bringing a knowledge of world history is by following up the history of technique, in what other ways can children learn of the achievements of other peoples? Of necessity the school course is based on, and chiefly concerned with, the history of our own country. But this must be set against a background of world history if it is to be presented in perspective. The present course, which ignores the civilisations of Africa, Asia, the Americas, helps not only to promote a chauvinist outlook but also to lay the basis for false and reactionary notions about "Western Civilisation".

Clearly it was against this narrow outlook that H. G. Wells was rebelling when he wrote *A Short History of the World*. There is a similar broad approach in Bernal's book, also by a non-historian. If the need for such studies is obvious to others then surely it should be clear to historians. At the universities, however, they still seem largely concerned with government, constitutions, politics and diplomacy in Europe.

Human and Social Development

When teachers attempt to put man back into the centre of the picture much of this becomes irrelevant. The aim must be to give due importance to all sides of human and social development. The main practical problem is the small amount of time available for history in school but, within the limits set, teachers can branch out from national into world history at specific linking points.

At present medieval history is much too localised. It is essential to get away from the parochial approach, to make it quite clear that Britain was a semi-barbarous outpost, forced to learn from others, until the later Middle Ages. This

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view is beginning to seep into accepted history; Runciman's books on the Crusades represent these as a barbarian invasion of cultivated Islam. It can be shown too that feudalism was not merely a matter of manors and monasteries but an international system centred elsewhere, England being on the periphery. Comparative studies help here; for instance, of peasant revolts in various countries in the era of the collapse of feudalism.

Most textbooks still present the renaissance merely as a revival of learning. But, of course, teachers must examine the social forms which made advances in technique, art and science possible, and not least the debt to Islam and the East generally. Other similar linking points can be used to open up a view of the rest of the world. Instead of giving Marco Polo more attention than the countries he visited, teachers can turn aside to discuss Chinese civilisation and Genghis Khan. Then, why did later explorers consistently seek routes to the East, what was so interesting about it, why did it have so many luxuries? These questions need asking and answering.

The Modern Period

In the capitalist era there is some historical basis for presenting a West European dominated world. When the modern period is studied under the heading "The Expansion of Europe" there is reference to other countries, but the problem of perspective remains. These countries need to be seen, not as offshoots of Europe, but as civilisations in their own right—the Indian, indigenous American, African and so on. Here books which approach history from the point of view of the other side of the world, e.g. Nehru's *Glimpses of World History,* are very valuable.

Africa is a particular problem because knowledge of its past civilisations is so tenuous, while at the same time it is essential to counteract the prevailing view that the Negro peoples have contributed nothing to civilisation—an attitude encouraging race prejudice. Ways should be found to deal with the civilisations destroyed by Arab and European conquest, at points where these naturally abut on the history course. But in a sense Africa, like Peru, is outside the main stream of the history taught and must be consciously brought in.

At present, if the nationalist approach is in any way jettisoned, it is to give place to a Christian approach. Christianity is plugged as the central theme, providing the basis of Western Civilisation, and it is here that prejudice and false ideas are now most frequently introduced. In practice, attempts to deal with world history often boil down to bringing America into the orbit of Western Christendom—with the aid of visiting professors or special courses in American history. This kind of approach inevitably means befogging the positive and progressive aspects of modern European history which took place in opposition to the universal Church.

What is essential is to reinstate a perspective of development on a world scale. This can be done by studying the rise and fall of civilisations outside Europe and by getting across the fact that the expansion of Europe, its superiority in technique from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, is another temporary phenomenon now coming to an end. Today we face a new epoch in world history. It is not, as in the past, a question of one or another nation struggling into the lead in a chaotic scramble for wealth and posessions, but of the development of a global order which humanity must achieve if it is not to go under.

The predominant impression that emerged is of the immense contribution of Marxism to historical study. There have been many attempts to slur over this, to dismiss Marxist studies as arid and dogmatic and contend that Marxists thrust the wealth and colour of history into a straitjacket. At this discussion it was clear that Marxist teachers are, on the contrary, in the forefront of the fight to rescue history from the bookshelves of academics and the arsenal of Cold War politicians; to bring it to life in all its variety and significance for a new generation which has so much to learn and to do.

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